



**NEWS –US LAY ASSOCIATES
SISTERS OF CHARITY OF THE INCARNATE WORD
SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS**

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**"The virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel (which means 'God with us')".
Mt. 1:23**



Holly wreaths are hung on doors not only for decoration but also as a symbol of eternal life and protection. The circular shape of the wreath, combined with the evergreen holly, reinforces the idea of eternity and the everlasting life promised through Christ. Holly represents eternal life as the leaves stay green during the winter months.



PEACE AND RECONCILIATION DURING THE SEASON OF ADVENT AND BEYOND

We are entering the season of Advent, a time of preparation for the coming of Our Lord and a time of reflection on how our fractured world can be reconciled and peace come about. We prepare our homes to reflect the change of season and joy enters our hearts. Then we look at how our world is broken and peace seems so far out. The readings for the season, especially those at the beginning of Advent, warn us to be vigilant and look for the signs of His coming. Jesus uses the examples of people being complacent and grow comfortable with all AS IS. But we still must listen to the call of justice, peace and reconciliation.

The government will not lean us towards that state of being. We need to move forward and work for those characteristics which the world does not seem to recognize – justice, peace and reconciliation.

Fr. Luke Gregory OFM wrote on this topic and makes us realize that “reconciliation is not merely a personal journey but a collective responsibility.....calls us to confront injustices with courage and compassion, echoing the teaching of Christ, who came to reconcile us to God and each other.”

Advent becomes a time to pray for peace, to advocate for justice, and to work toward a society where the values of love and charity prevail. In the Beatitudes, Jesus proclaimed, *“blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God.”* This statement not only encourages us work for peace “out there” but invites us to a personal calm that reflects our relationship with God. As we watch and prepare during Advent, we must consider how we can contribute to the peace of Christ in our own lives. This could take the form of community service, involvement in peace-building initiatives, or simple acts that promote kindness in daily interactions with family and friends.

Advent gives us a sense of urgency and readiness. The verses in Matthew conclude with an admonition to be ready, *“for we do not know the hour when the Lord will come”*. This readiness goes further than just being vigilant; it takes in a life lived in active anticipation of God’s will and kingdom established on earth

Questions for reflection:

1. As you read the above, did you see yourself working towards peace and reconciliation? How? Did you say to yourself, “someone else can do that, I am not able.”
2. Can you see yourself being a peacemaker? How? With whom?
3. What does the phrase “contribute to the peace of Christ in our own lives” mean to you?
4. Is this being aware of the needs around you a “seasonal” urge, or do you work all year long in advocating for the poor and needy?



January

January 25
January 28

Lamarr Graves
Maggie Ybarra

January 30
January 19

Sonia Comacho
Robert Vega, Jr.



*“And the Word was made flesh
and made His dwelling among us”

*May the God who came to our world
more than 2000 years ago
make us aware of his presence
in everyone around us.*

MIGRANT MINISTRY PROJECT RECEIVES 2025 “Urrutia Family Grant”



Martha Otniveros, St. John the Baptist Associate Community Facilitator, presents Sr. Leticia Gutiérrez Valderrama the Urrutia Family Grant money for the work her Congregation has been doing in El Paso on behalf of immigrants. (See proposal below)

I am nominating the Migrant Hospitality Ministry for this grant because of the marvelous work the two sisters who coordinate it are doing. Sr. Leticia Gutierrez Valderrama and Sr. Elisete Signor came from Chicago in April, 2024 to minister to the migrants arriving in El Paso. They are known as the Scalabrinian Sisters. Their congregation was founded in Italy by Bishop Scalabrini and their primary mission is to evangelize and minister to migrants and refugees. Sr. Leticia and Sr. Elisete have been working diligently with the migrants in our city since they began their mission here in April. When the migrant centers closed in January, 2025, they continued their work in Juárez. At the present time, they are assisting migrants in the hallways of the courts and at the immigration detention centers (two in El Paso and one in Chaparral, NM).

Sister Leticia spends her days in the El Paso courthouse comforting and helping migrants facing detention and deportation. Some migrants drive to El Paso from cities like Pecos, Midland, San Antonio, Las Cruces and Hobbs to report for their court date only to be detained by ICE. In some cases, Sr. Leticia has to move the vehicles of the migrants who drive here from those cities. When they arrive in El Paso, they park in a parking lot and she pays the parking fees and moves the vehicles to a safer location. Sometimes she must fill the gas tanks.

Sister Elisete goes to the detention centers to help detainees get in touch with family members, a friend or boss because their phones and all other possessions are taken from them. She gives them \$20 to purchase a calling card so they can make their phone call to let their loved ones or boss know that they've been detained. Calls to some countries are very expensive. Other needs of the migrants are: buying groceries, diapers, medicine and paying utility bills for the families of detainees who are the sole providers. Sister Elisete, also pays the postage fees when she mails documents, books, bibles, rosaries, or photos to the detainees because these

cannot be taken to them at the detention center. She pays for translating and notarizing documents that are to be presented in court. She has been asking for monetary donations to help pay for all of the needs I have described. This grant money will be a big blessing for Sr. Leticia and Sr. Elisete's ministry if it is awarded to them.



CHRISTMAS MEMORIES..... UNWRAPPED

A happy memory vivid in my mind of a long ago Christmas was the first Christmas spent in the United States. I was 10 years old. Our maternal grandmother brought us to live with her. Christmas was filled with festivities! I participated in a Posada. Christmas Day with my cousins was filled with love. My aunt gave me a beautiful pink dress that fit perfectly! This was a day to go to Mass with family. Afterwards, I enjoyed playing with cousins all day long!

Rosamaria Garza, Stella Maris Community, Corpus Christi, TX

As a child, the highlight of Christmas was participating in the Posadas from December 16-24 where we went from door to door with Joseph and Mary asking for shelter. My Dad's company had been on strike for three years so there was no paycheck, no food, no clothes, no Christmas gift giving. Singing and praying at church filled my heart with joy. We looked forward to getting a small brown bag with an orange and peanuts at the end of each night of the Posadas. Quite a treat! Eternally grateful for all God's blessings.

Petra Robles, St. John the Baptist Community, El Paso, TX

I remember when I was five years old my mother dressed me up with a beautiful light yellow dress. I was so happy with my beautiful dress but you have to understand. I grew up with three brothers. I don't know if it was neighborhood family or just neighbors that were over at our house And my brothers always had other boys coming over to play. My mother said don't go outside. The boys had sparklers, but of course I snuck out so one of the boys threw a sparkler at me and it landed on my on my beautiful yellow dress. I cried all night

Beba Dimas – Stella Maris Community, Corpus Christi, TX

A few days before Christmas preparations began in the neighborhood. My cousins, my cousins' cousins, aunts and uncles all helped in the butchering of the pig. It seemed everyone had a special job. We children just ran around and ate a crackling or two when they were ready. My aunt's kitchen was the center of activity with the preparation of the corn husks and red chile for the tamales. Then the men brought in meat from the pig that was hanging from a tree. What a feast, but not until after midnight Mass. Then the real party began!

Maria Elena Schuerman, St. John the Baptist Community, El Paso, TX

The happiest Christmas I remember was growing up as a kid going to visit my grandparents (Grandpa and Grandma Camacho) in San Marcos, TX. They lived out in the country in a clearing of a pasture. Not only was it fun, but at the same time a bit scary for a kid like me growing up hearing stories of the "Llorona". That is a story for another time.

Anyway, it was fun and happy times because most of my aunts, uncles and cousins would come to spend Christmas at Grandpa and Grandma. The house was full of lots of love and stories to hear from Grandpa and cousins to hang out with. Our Christmas presents were not extravagant at all. We would get socks and undergarments, and for the younger kids an occasional doll for the girls and a car or truck for the boys. The best part was getting a paper bag full of apples, oranges, pecans and candies. Grandpa would break a huge candy cane, the kind that looks like a big log and give all of us pieces of it. The Christmas tree was huge with Christmas lights that looked like candles that gurgled. The tree was always covered with tons of presents.

My aunts and my mom would be busy in the kitchen helping Grandma with the cooking. We always had tons and tons of tamales. We had to take shifts eating because there were too many of us to sit down at one time even though the table and benches grandpa made was long enough to accommodate up to 12 people. Those were the best times - eating tamales and waiting, waiting and waiting until we could open our presents.

To this day, when I smell a wood-burning chimney memories return to those days of my young life smelling Grandma's firewood stove where she cooked with so much love for her family.

Sonia Comacho, Amicus Community, Lubbock, TX

All our Christmases were memorable. My mom would flock the tree and we would wait until my dad had a day off to decorate it. We received a gift from our parents and a gift from "Santa". My dad would take us downtown to the "Placita" to see the decorations. We waited in anticipation for the lighting of the star on the mountain. It was lit once a year around December 18th. It was called the "Star of David".

My parents went to midnight Mass while we babysat their friends' children.

There was no special dinner, but we never missed it either. We never thought we were lacking anything. As we got older, a dear friend, Mrs. Emma Gaylord, would bring us a turkey with all the trimmings. My whole family had helped pick pecans for her from her pecan grove. She needed to have the pecans picked and shelled for the many fruit cakes she baked at Christmas time for family members. Those were memories I cherish. They were peaceful times.

Rita Licano, St. John the Baptist Community, El Paso, TX

As we look to the New Year, 2026, it may be good to reflect on one or two of the following quotes on peace:

- "When the power of love overcomes the love of power, the world will know peace." — Jimi Hendrix in Southern Living
- "Hate cannot drive out hate: only love can do that." — Martin Luther King Jr. in Today Show snippets
- "Love is the purest form of a soul at peace." — Matthew Donnelly in [Parade.com](https://www.parade.com) and A-Z Quotes
- On Inner Peace:
 - "Peace begins with a smile." — Mother Teresa in Today Show and A-Z Quotes
 - "Peace comes from within. Do not seek it without." — Buddha in [SUCCESS.com](https://www.success.com)
 - "If you cannot find peace within yourself, you will never find it anywhere else." — Linda Evans in Today Show snippets
- On Understanding & Action:
 - "Peace cannot be kept by force; it can only be achieved by understanding." — Albert Einstein in Southern Living and Xavier University
 - "It isn't enough to talk about peace. One must believe in it. And it isn't enough to believe in it. One must work at it." — Eleanor Roosevelt in Today Show snippets