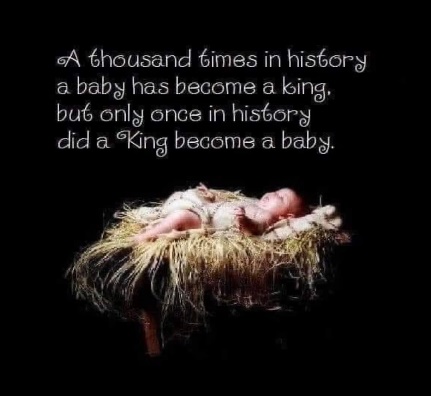
*** 2022 A.D.***

***The Ackerman Family Letter***

***Blessed Feast and Season of the***

***Nativity of our Lord and Savior,***

***Jesus Christ, who brings order out of chaos.***

From time to time, we consider all of the ways in which people are greeted this time of year. The chaos that has been created in the world in which we find ourselves is not only divided over who Jesus Christ is, but has distanced itself from many of the ways in which we formerly greeted people on Jesus’ birthday, and the ways in which we decorated. We now see that even Christmas trees are rejected in some places in our country, where we fought for Freedom of Religion not Freedom from Religion. For a while, they became “Holiday Trees” and then “Winter Trees.” The incredible irony is that there was a time when Christians would not have Christmas trees in their houses since, like the Christmas Wreath, they were seen as pagan introductions. With the remarkable fascination that Americans have with members of the British Royal Family, perhaps we may need to recall Prince Albert, the husband of Queen Victoria who wanted to have in the castles in which he and the Queen lived, a visible “Christmas reminder” of his native land. No matter how much God reveals Himself, creating order out of chaos, we human beings are much better at creating chaos out of order.

We are happy to report that our “Family Tree” has had an ordered year, even with changes to several of the branches, an occasional “falling” of the needles from the tree and a spreading of the tree, along with, we pray, roots that go deeper to the source of what offers life to the Tree.

**Jo/Joann/Mom/NaNa** has blessed our tree with her stability and resilience against the winds of the world, and she continues to pump love into the branches of the tree. This has been a year not without challenges for her, as she recovers from surgery a little over a year ago, and mourns the loss of her parish church which had been such a source of joy, comfort, and peace to her for ten years. Nothing stays the same, but for those of us in the Church we wish that dramatic changes wouldn’t happen - at least not in our lifetime. The former parishioners continue to be a source of joy to her, though. The remarkable growth of published books this year in the Publishing business which she manages, the Parish Press, have brought wonderful responses from around the world. Although thrilled with each book, she is slightly partial to the book written by her husband, with pictures of her granddaughter leaping from the pages, and a painting of her granddaughter, drawn by her son (in law) on the cover. She wants to assume that those who are reading this have already bought at least one of this year’s books, so you may wish to go to: https://theparishpress.com. (Friend check: “name one of the books Jo published this year.”). In a remarkable and patient way she continues to provide Christian materials for those who need to nourish their family tree. No paragraph about Jo is complete unless it mentions her unwavering Faith in God: The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, her unconditional love of her husband of 55 years (whom she met 60 years ago), or her beautiful ten branches: Keith, Renee, Lynne, Donna, Ethan, Rob, Ellie, Dominic, Natalia, and Betty. PLUS (for those who know her well) her adoring and adorable “baby” — the ever-present **Lillibet**, who loves her adopted family passionately!

**Bp. Keith/PaPa/Dad/Your Grace** cannot believe that he is writing this - but by the grace of God. This paragraph could be called **“After the Fall.”** Most of you know that last December he fell off a ten-foot ladder, was rushed to the Emergency Room and the ICU with four broken ribs and a concussion. It would have appeared that his usual rapidly moving and ever-changing ministry was over. On the day after the fall, his chaplain brought all that was needed to celebrate Mass, which “the patient” then did in the ICU. In 48 years of ordination, he has never not celebrated Mass on a Sunday. After the Mass a nurse very respectfully said, “Your Grace” (she heard his chaplain say that) “we thought that ‘Bishop’ was an odd first name, but now we understand.” God has blessed him with grace-filled healing, with the only residual effects related to sleep. That portion of the brain is still healing — and many sleepless nights have produced more opportunities to pray. While he still does what is asked of him as Assisting Bishop in the Diocese of Fort Worth (which included unexpected weekly trips to Waco for a number of months) he has the privilege of celebrating Mass in the Chapel of Our Lady of Walsingham in our home. It is meant to be the family Chapel, so we are blessed when family members come to Mass in this very special “Order out of chaos” place in our home. He was very honored to receive a D.D. degree Honoris Causa from R.E.C. Seminary in Blue Bell, PA, and to be the Commencement Speaker in May, and to be with the Riches family. A further honor was bestowed entitled “The Dr. Robert W. Bosworth, Jr., ‘Holders of Hope Award.” The kind words in the citation are especially appreciated given the generosity and kindness of the dear man for which the award is named. A 55th anniversary cruise with very dear friends, was the one “get away” this year, and visits from a Latvian Bishop born in Sweden in the same county as the Akerman family plus precious cousins (including the 92-year-old “Patriarch” of the Italian side of the family) enriched our year. Seeing other parts of the “tree” enriched all of us as younger “sprigs” in our tree saw the branches that have produced much joy as the tree has grown — bigger (and older!) Jesus provides grace after we fall, and being able to thank Him daily for more and more healing is critical, as He provides strength and nourishment for even the drooping branches.

**Keith and Donna and Gizmo and Josie** **and their seven cats.** Wow what a year for this branch. **Donna** has really had an amazing year, from her extraordinary gifts as now being a certified cat trainer and dog trainer, plus receiving certification as a Citizen Forester through the City of Fort Worth, to welcoming a new dog (a Staffordshire Terrier) into the family, to continuing work on earning a Doctorate in Business Administration, to being a great doggie Mom, as Gizmo earns merit badges as a Dog Scout, to being a great wife — the list goes on. Josie is a big dog — a big dog who was mistreated badly, and now is being greatly cared for and loved by Donna and Keith. Do you understand why they named her “Josie?” They have quite a few cats (7, to be exact: Sammy, Riley, Felix, K.C., Nico, Lydia and Angel) so it’s “Josie and the Pussycats.” Their wonderful dog, Gizmo is happy with his new friend, and he is very secure in his achievements as a Dog Scout – with merit badges. All of this activity is done while the cats observe and participate in family excitement.

After decades of being in an executive role in housing the homeless, feeding the hungry and building facilities to meet their needs, **Keith** is now the COO of a consulting firm that helps and discovers new ways to support non-profit groups, foundations, mission driven organizations and other ministries. You can check it out by going to Colton Strawser Consulting: https://www.coltonstrawser.com. In addition to his usual engagements as number one son, number one brother, and number one uncle, he was just elected to the Corporation and the Board of Directors of Nashotah House - the theological seminary where he lived from 1971-1974! He took his first steps there while his Dad was a seminarian, and now he walks onto the campus as a Board member. We know of no other time in the history of the seminary when a son became a Board Member after his Dad had served for decades. As a family we are thrilled.

**Renee and Ethan and Ellie (18) and Dominic (15) and Dahlia (the family dog).** There is an old bad Western joke that says, “You know you ought to be on the stage, and there’s one leaving in about an hour.” Well, in our family there is always someone on the stage, and all four Norris’ have done that this year! **Renee** is now not only at Haltom High School, producing, directing and choreographing but she is on the board of a Christian Performing Arts Studio, called STAND, where she is teaching a class to adults there along with doing a musical. In addition, she is working at the Artisan Center Theater, a well know local theatre, where she has directed and choreographed, PLUS she performed on stage for the first time in years! Her return to the stage was to have a starring role in *Steel Magnolias*, a role she has dreamed of playing. She has now since high school and university years played all three main characters: Truvy, Shelby, and M’lynn. People are still talking about *Tuck Everlasting* — an amazing directorial work that she did at The Artisan — with Dominic having one of the leads. She directed an extraordinary production of *Sweeney* *Todd* at Haltom High School. She recently had a key part in a short film, that we will keep you posted on, that deals with a very sensitive subject. All in all, she has this year taught or directed all age groups, and she especially loved teaching her 5–8-year-olds and special ed theater class and having worked with Ellie and Dominic in productions.

**Ethan** continues to be engaged in a variety of ways in communicating, acting, and conveying everything from commercials to live worship at a local United Methodist Church and dazzling people with his passion for Shakespearean acting. He is rapidly nearing his goal of performing in as many Shakespearean plays as are available to perform! His performance in the *Tempest* this past summer, in the role of King Alonzo of Milan was breathtaking. It is wonderful to see him be in theatre and to be a theatre Dad (and husband) at the same time. Ethan is a family man, and the love he shows his family is obvious and it is appreciated. It is not always easy for a dad to watch his daughter (a) meet a young man who becomes a major part of her life, and (b) watch his daughter drive off to university — plus, to discover an amazing young woman come into the life of his son. Many dynamics have changed, but one of the things that is a testimony is that Ellie’s boyfriend and friends and Dominic’s girlfriend and friends like to hang out at the Norris house. Dahlia, who is now 5 years old, takes all of that in stride, and in spite of her “Black Lab” size, she thinks of herself as a lap dog.

**Ellie** graduated from High School last June and we are amazed with the number of awards and scholarships she earned. She said very little about it in advance, so we simply sat there in the auditorium hearing her name being called and watching her walk across the stage with a new ribbon or certificate. Renee really misses having Ellie at Haltom Theatre since Ellie defined the sound system and researched characters in a very thorough way. Ellie is a Freshman at Sam Houston University in Huntsville Texas and she is majoring in Forensic Chemistry (and Psychology.). Her advanced placement classes in high school have been applied to university credits, so having just completed her first semester she has almost enough credits to be considered a sophomore. Her boyfriend, Matt, is really a wonderful young man. Ethan and Renee love him and Matt’s family adore Ellie. Matt helps NaNa and PaPa from time to time, too. Matt is majoring in Political Science, and while he and Ellie are not at the same university, keep posted...there may be some academic update information coming soon.

**Dominic** has once again, now as a sophomore, having had the lead in his high school musical, and he is in a very popular series called *That Drama Life* which you can subscribe to on YouTube. In the midst of the first Season, in the script, a “Dominic Fan Club” was formed, and it is hilarious. (Dominic is very humble, so you may not want to mention the Fan Club), but he is seen by many in the theatre world as a “rising star.” His incredibly tear-jerking roles in *Tuck Everlasting*, and *The Secret Garden,* and *God Spell* resulted in standing ovations by the audience. He also had leads in *Beauty and the Beast* at the Artisan and *Grease* in high School. In many ways for his NaNa and PaPa his story is one that demonstrates what happens when people see remarkable talent and know what to do with it, rather than look for a flaw and allow it to be the definition. As a very active little boy he didn’t always have the ability simply to sit still and listen. Precious personalities can be damaged by people who do not understand the uniqueness of God’s creation. Dominic creates an environment of joy, and he really is his cousins, Natalia and Betty’s hero — more like a brother. Dominic’s girlfriend, Paloma, is an amazing young woman, and our family gatherings are enriched by Matt and Paloma…and well, read the next part about Natalia.

**Lynne, Rob, Natalia and Betty** are forces of nature. It would be very difficult to say what they do - at any given time - since they are fully engaged in so much. Business - well **Rob** received a promotion in the spring and is now a Senior Relationship Manger for the Private Wealth Management Department of Fidelity Investments. The beauty of living in the type of house they have is that his office is now right there in his house! But his remarkable commitment to his Parish (Cathedral Church of the Holy Communion), Camp Crucis (the church camp where Lynne and Rob met), his Fraternity (Delta Tau Delta) as Chapter Advisor, and being a very good son to his parents, a good husband and a good Dad (lots of transportation with that) takes up most of his time. He continues to sing in the cathedral choir and serve as the President of the Men’s Club, St. James Brotherhood. The Camp has required a great deal more of his time than originally expected but with his brother often cooking there and his cousin (who is the Dean of St. Vincent’s Cathedral) doing an upcoming summer as Director, we can understand why when we look at his “Loft Office” we can see two computer screens instead of one.

**Lynne** remains the bubbly, and yet very focused woman who is so highly respected by her family, her colleagues, her parishioners and her friends. Rob and Lynne continue to provide the highest quality wine, and now Olive Oil, and also now Coffee, that one can imagine. BUT she is also still making sure that people get their Girl Scout Cookies! She makes sure that people say their prayers, go to Mass, and live the Christian life by virtue of being the President of the Daughters of the Holy Cross Chapter at Holy Communion Cathedral. Lynne is a member of the flower guild and is the Parliamentarian for the Holy Communion Women’s group. Professionally she continues to be Assistant Principal for the Pre-K Partnerships, which is a School Readiness Integration Program, partnering with thirty-seven Childcare Facilities within the Dallas Independent School District. She is not only responsible for the campuses and the instructors but she mentors all of them with love and compassion, and she “speaks the truth in love.”

She calls her parents almost daily which is a remarkable gift to us and helps us to feel included (plus figure out where everyone is!) She is an extraordinarily committed sister and aunt, and in spite of the fact that she lives the greatest distance from her parents and siblings, no matter what day or what time of the day, she is “there” supporting all of us, as she dodges Dallas traffic and makes sure that her daughters are a loving presence. She does all of that while at the same time making certain that her high achieving daughters don’t miss a thing.

**Natalia**…wow! Cheerleader par excellence, Select Choir member, Altar Server, Church Youth Group member, Girl Scout, Professional Business club (DECA), Vocal Ensemble (which is the show choir), Treasurer of the Sophomore class, and the list goes on. We love seeing her in cheerleading competitions, where her squad at Newman Smith High School recently won first place in every category at the district competition. Her cheerleading squad received a bid to Nationals which will be held at Disney World in February. She will be going to Disney World with her Choir in May and has been working hard to earn the money by baby-sitting, watering flowers for a neighbor, and taking care of her grandparents’ house (Rob’s dad and step mom) while they travel. Plus, no matter how late Saturday events goes, there she is in church along with, her boyfriend, Simeon, whom she met in high school in Spanish class. Simeon now attends Mass on Sundays, and Youth group with her. He is a very polite and kind young man, and watching him with Matt (Ellie) and Paloma (Dominic) delights us. She has reduced her cookie sales goal a little bit this year due to other activities, but is continuing to plan her project for the highest award in Girl Scouts. She continues to love Camp Crucis and recently went directly from a Cheerleading event to the Youth event — all in the same day! Some may know that her other Grandfather is a Vocational Deacon assigned at their Cathedral, and he is very proud of her serving gifts — particularly as Crucifer. After all, he trains the Servers (acolytes.) We are particularly proud of how well she recovered from the broken collar bone, having been dropped by the “cheerleading handlers.” She healed, quickly and she went right back to it. We appreciate the fact that she does not allow setbacks to define her. She is very excited about being in the high school musical *Mama Mia*. She has quite a bond with her Aunt Renee, and ever since Aunt Renee’s production of *Mama Mia* several years ago, Natalia has been hoping to be in it!

**Betty** continues to be the little charmer. As many may know, she is on the cover of a book that was just published. The short name is: “B, B, and B” which stands for “Bible, Bishop and Betty” and after an amazing commitment on her part and that of her parents, the popular live-streaming version is now a book (which is available to you!) And if you ask really nicely, she will sign it for you and then ask her PaPa to sign it if you wish. It is fun to go places and find out that she is recognized because of the live-stream. She loves her Uncle Ethan, and he is the artist who painted the extraordinary cover of the book. Betty is also very active at her Cathedral and also serves Mass there, after being trained by her “Grandpa Chip.” She joyfully went to Camp Crucis this summer, and just like the rest of her family, it’s not just the place where her Mom and Dad met — it’s like a second home. She has made many friends in many places, and although she can be on the quiet side, people listen carefully to what she has to say, and they always have a “take away.” Whenever she arrives at NaNa and PaPa’s house, Lillibet starts squealing and running around the house, runs up the steps to the second floor (where the Chapel and the Baseball room and the “guest” room are located) and jumps up on the bed to be with Betty. Betty is in elementary school (her last year) where the Fine Arts are emphasized, and this year she was in Dance (last year it was ukulele.) She is really looking forward to performing in her school musical, *Frog and Toad*, which will be this March. She will be playing a snail! She’s got rhythm!

We are very grateful that you have taken time to read our family letter. With all of the mail you receive, coupled with email and numerous news reports, we understand that one more Christmas letter — especially one as large as ours can mean a commitment of time. But frankly, we have been so blessed by the love of family and friends that we see our annual letter as a “Praise Report” where we can share with those whom we love the many ways in which God has blessed us. Just an hour or so before I have written this, reports of a tornado rushing through our area was heralded with sirens. We will assess what damage to the “trees” has occurred, but by God’s grace, our tree stands with strength, firmly rooted in Word and Sacrament, with branches and twigs that reflect the nutrition given by God, and with faith, that even the branches which have fallen over the years are more like the acorns in our front yard...fallen but awaiting growth. **God still gets the last word**.

With love in Jesus Christ, whose Nativity we celebrate,

**A Tree Growing in Texas**

**The Ackerman-Bevacqua-Norris-Shattuck family: one Tree with many branches**

**To order wine, coffee, or olive oil go to:**

**www.scoutandcellar.com/shattuck**

**and Girl Scout cookies coming in February**

**To order our books, DVDs, and Religious supplies go to:**

[**https://theparishpress.com**](https://theparishpress.com)

**to see our Christmas letter on line go to:**

[**https://bishopkeithackerman.com**](https://bishopkeithackerman.com)

**We are also on Facebook and YouTube**

**And Dominic is on YouTube at**

**That Drama Life**

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