



## THE ACKERMAN CHRISTMAS LETTER 2014

***“All is calm; all is bright.”***

Modern Christmas Carols of the last few hundred years often convey the heartfelt prayers of their composers, for Peace, for Health, for Calm, and for a deepened faith in the Savior, Jesus Christ. All around us we see terror and conflict, and we long for the calmness that will take away fear and a brightness that will bring us hope. His Name is **Jesus**. He has come, and He is coming again. Those facts alone express a joy that cannot be explained in mere happiness - emotions that fade away - but in a state of being which has been won for us by He who took on human flesh. He has made us family.

**The Ackerman family** rejoices in that hope, and wishes to thank all of you for being our scattered family in virtually every State and in numerous countries.

**Mama Jo**, as so many people call her, is doing so very well after her heart attack. Apart from some fatigue (which most 69 years olds occasionally have) she is still in high gear at

home and at church. In many ways she functions as the parish Secretary at St. Timothy's Church in Fort Worth where her "retired" husband is the Vicar. One of Jo's major highlights was in having her dear sister, Rose and her brother-in-law Richard along with six nieces and nephews come to Texas for a family vacation that included Bp. Keith's 40th anniversary celebration as a priest and 20th anniversary as a bishop. Having so many family members "pool side" was a great joy for her (and for the rest of the Texas family.) She was excited with having other family members and friends who have visited this year including Bp. Keith's cousins Jerry and Monica. We had a great time taking the train to Dallas where we met Keith and he showed us around the new Opportunity Center that he managed. Another high point was the gift of a cruise from dear Pennsylvania friends; this cruise took us to Mexico and Key West Florida and included a Seaplane flight onto one of the Keys. Jo loved it!! Jo continues to have two grandchildren with her after school most school days, and tries to figure out creative ways to have the other two grandchildren come as often as possible!

**Bishop Keith** simply cannot believe that he has been ordained for 40 years this past Sunday, December 21st. The good people of St. Timothy's did a wonderful job in hosting the celebration on June 29<sup>th</sup> which was his 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary to the episcopate. The number of friends who came, along with the beautiful voices of both St. Timothy's and St. Mark's, provided a magnificent opportunity for God to be glorified. Bp. Keith continues to be active in numerous ways in the Church internationally, nationally, and locally, and has returned to his beloved Diocese of Quincy on several occasions. The 9th Bishop of Quincy treats the 8th Bishop of Quincy with great love, and when the 6th, 7th, 8th and 9th Bishops of Quincy are together, 41 years of episcopal ministry is celebrated. He attended his 50th High School Reunion in McKeesport, PA, and had the joy of celebrating Mass and preaching at St. Mary's in Charleroi! Family time is always precious for him, and we are at that point in life where we can reflect on the fact that "being" is underrated while "doing" is all too often overrated. The joy of seeing God's hand at work in the lives of our children and grandchildren, and then to see them as engaged in their parishes and vocations as they are, is a gift that cannot be expressed adequately. A really big event for this coming year is an International Congress which will be held in Fort Worth July 13 - 17. With leaders from around the world, this will be a great event.

**Keith** and **Donna** celebrated their 20th wedding anniversary on August 20! Having just moved into a new house last year they have deferred their dream anniversary trip until their 25th anniversary. Keith attends St. Timothy's Church, and has helped out quite a bit there. He will be going with his Dad to the Holy Land (his 4th time and his Dad's 14th time) in March. He will be co-hosting the Tour with Bp. Keith with nearly 40 pilgrims joining them! Having finished overseeing the construction of the Opportunity Center for the homeless, after 11 years at CitySquare in Dallas, with 9 of those years as COO, Keith moved on over to another portion of the Ministry as the Executive Director of The Cottages at Hickory Crossing: [www.hickorycottages.org](http://www.hickorycottages.org). The Cottages will house 50 of Dallas County's most vulnerable homeless. Keith and Donna returned to their "home turf" where they attended Keith's 25th High School Reunion. They attended the Charleroi Cougars Football game at the new stadium, went to Mass at St. Mary's, and had a blast at Kennywood Park. Keith has been on several Scouting expeditions with Dominic, and is a

hero to his nieces and nephew. Donna continues to work diligently in her employment where she is a Project Manager, and she dazzles all of us during various family gatherings with spectacular food! All dogs and cats [most of which are rescued pets] report that they love the new house, and that they feel fortunate to have Keith and Donna taking care of them.



**Renee** and **Ethan** have just celebrated their 15th Wedding anniversary! In the midst of their busy vocations they make quality time to be with Ellie (10) and Dominic (7). They had a great time on a vacation with “the other ‘grandparents,’” Jane and Gary, in Galveston Texas at Galveston Beach, and had a few other fun activities with them at Six Flags Over Texas, the Zoo, and the Christmas Lighting in Fort Worth - to name a few. For Renee a real highlight as a professional in high school theater was to direct and to see the launching of Ellie and Dominic’s acting career in “Peter Pan.” Renee’s students (the “biggs”) helped to shepherd the children (the “littles”) in what was truly an amazing Production. Renee was excited to have Dominic with her for the wedding of a friend in Mexico, where Dominic dazzled the wedding guest with his dance moves. Ethan continues to work at the Studios in Dallas where his talents are so very often showcased on The Blaze. If you have seen Glenn Beck’s shows, then you have probably seen Ethan’s hand at work. Ethan also works ever closer to his goal in acting in every Shakespearean Play, and gained another notch this year in a stellar performance of “Much ado about Nothing.” Jo’s sister and her family were thrilled to see his performance. Grandma Ackerman would be quite impressed with this theatrical family.

**Ellie** (5th grade) and **Dominic** (2nd grade) are having an extraordinary year. Ellie absolutely loves singing in the School Choir, the Village Voices; is a whiz in the kitchen; and is thrilled to have her Aunt Lynne as her Girl Scout Leader. Ellie had a great time at the Diocesan Church Camp this summer. At school (her last year in Elementary School) she has been selected to be on the Leadership Team where she does Public Announcements, Flag ceremonies, and Hall Monitoring. She also helps with the pre-K and Kindergarten classes. She is well suited for this because she is the best “big cousin” that Natalia and Betty could ever have! Dominic is moving quickly through the ranks in Cub Scouts, and loved Cub Scout Camp this year. He occasionally attends Mass at St. Timothy’s when he is not with his family at St. Stephen’s, and when at St. Timothy’s serves as “boat boy” carrying the boat of incense. Both Ellie and Dominic loved being in “Peter Pan,” and Dominic was able to work his gymnastic skills into his interpretation of being Twin #1. Every Christmas Ellie and

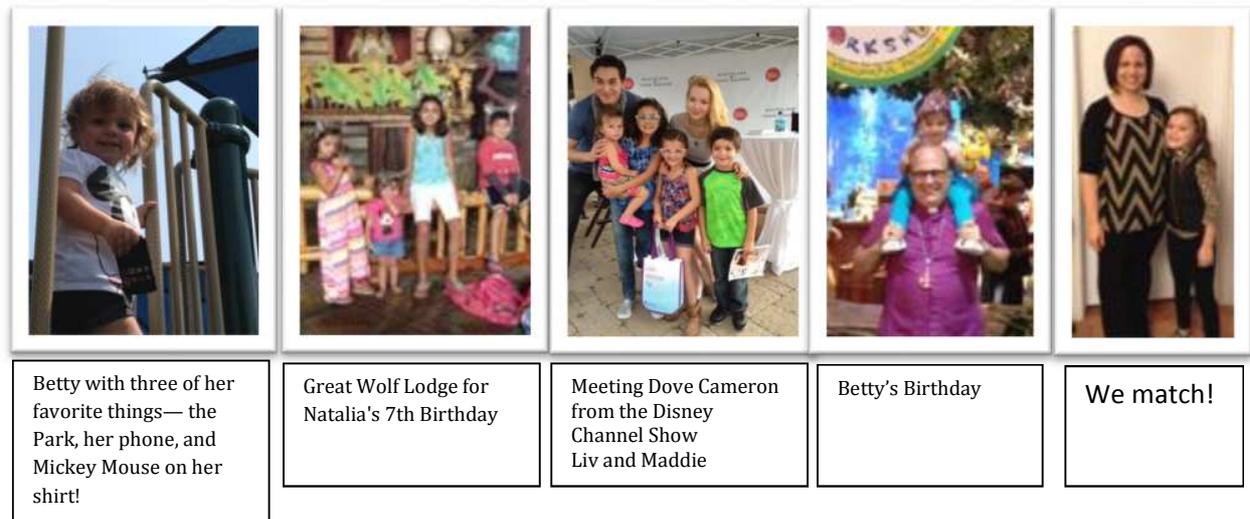
Dominic host a gathering for friend's parents to get a day of shopping and preparations while the children do a series of holiday crafts and activities. They have friends bring items for Uncle Keith's Ministry at City Square in Dallas and then do a delivery.



**Lynne** and **Rob** have just celebrated their 10th Wedding Anniversary! Lynne started the year at Jerry Junkins Elementary School as a Teacher in a Pre-K classroom, having been there since 2006, but suddenly was promoted with her last day in the Classroom being October 9. She is now a Pre-K Specialist for the Dallas Independent School District, and in that capacity travels to nine different schools, supporting sixteen teachers in their classrooms. She leads training for Teachers. Lynne has one more semester in Graduate School and will graduate on May 2 with a Master's Degree in Educational Administration. She is very active at the Church of the Holy Communion where she teaches (surprise) Pre-K Sunday School, helps coordinate the Sunday School and recently directed the Pageant. As Girl Scout Leader of Troop 5721 she leads the Juniors (4th - 5th grade) and is thrilled to have Natalia and Ellie in Scouting together. Rob has travelled quite a bit this year for his job at KwikBoost, and continues to "connect people and keep them charged up." His company, which is a supplier of personalized Charging Stations, is to be found in a variety of places! Rob is also now singing in the parish choir.

**Natalia** (2nd grade) and **Betty** (2 1/2) are thrilled that a playground in their neighborhood has been rebuilt. For Natalia, going to a new school this year has been spectacular; she loves Country Place Elementary School. Her big goal this year in Girl Scouts is to sell 1000 boxes of Girl Scout cookies! Thanks to those of you who helped and supported this year's endeavors whereby she sold 650 boxes! They are helping a little boy named Duncan, who has leukemia, and will also be donating to his brother. Natalia started gymnastics this year, very quickly jumped from the Bronze to the Silver category, and we are told that she is rapidly moving to the Gold category very soon. Natalia loves gymnastics and finds every opportunity to cartwheel and to do flips off anything! Natalia is singing in the parish choir and recently played one of the Magi in the Pageant at their parish. One of the highlights of

the summer was her week at Camp Crucis with Ellie. They are BCF's (Best Cousins Forever) and love being together. Betty appears to be preparing for a career as a stand-up comedienne; she keeps us laughing all of the time. She loves technology, and keeps a toy telephone with her at all times. She regularly contacts her NaNa and PaPa all by herself on Face Time. She is now swimming in the family swimming pool with her sister and cousins, and regularly wants to go to NaNa and PaPa's house. Betty not only loves going to church but one of the things she wants for Christmas is a picture of Jesus. Sometimes at NaNa and PaPa's house she asks to go to "talk to Jesus" in the Chapel (the Chapel of Our Lady of Walsingham.) "Betty Boop" makes friends easily, loves to sing and dance, and can sing the soundtrack from "Frozen." She played an angel in the parish pageant. Betty handed out knitted caps to about 20 of the homeless around the Opportunity Center in Dallas. She was so happy to give gifts with Uncle Keith and her sister and Ellie and Dominic.



As a concluding postscript Jo and I are humbled that our grandchildren share in ministry with us, and, in particular, participate in the ministry of their Uncle Keith to feed the hungry, clothe those with no cloak, and house those for whom a clean dumpster is a good night's sleep. This year all of our grandchildren will be caroling and delivering Chapstick and lotions and cold weather clothing items to CitySquare. This is a meaningful tradition

for them, and allows them to be blessed by those for whom faith and trust in Jesus is a real life endeavor, where in them, Ellie, Dominic, Natalia and Betty are privileged to see the face of Jesus, born in poverty, in a manger, in a stable, and in a world that prayed that this life might be calm and be bright.



With love in Christ,

Bp. Keith, Joann, Keith, Donna, Renee, Ethan, Lynne, Rob, Ellie, Dominic, Natalia, and Betty



**May the Lord Jesus Bless us one and all in this coming year.**