

OUR *catholic*
JOURNEY

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF CATHOLIC UNITED FINANCIAL



Merry Christmas

from your friends at Catholic United
Financial



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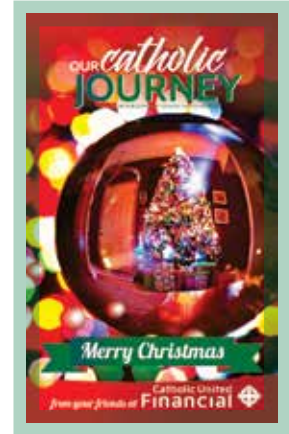
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A MESSAGE FROM MIKE



Michael M. Ahles | President, CEO and Chair of the Board

It's the most wonderful time of the year...

Mom loved this song. *It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year*, released by Andy Williams in 1963, has been a true staple of Christmas for more than a generation. When I hear it — and we hear it often during our blessed Advent and Christmas season — I think of her, have a bounce in my step, joy in my heart and I cannot wait to see family and friends to sing a few lyrics. “Kids jingle belling,” “much mistltoeing” and “hearts will be glowing, when loved ones are near.” I feel like singing right now – join me!

At first blush, celebrating Christmas during a pandemic may not seem to be a most wonderful experience. Yet the prospect of a vaccine is encouraging, plus so many terrific things are

happening at Catholic United which bring new hope for a bright 2021.

Our single premium youth term life insurance will be available online via our website in January. New products will be launched mid-summer. And an expanded, Triennial Conference awaits our Members in August. All are exciting and we'll be sharing more about each soon!

I wish for each of you a most wonderful Christmas! God bless and be safe.

If there is anything I can do to help you, please give me a call at (651) 765-4124 or email me at mahles@catholicunited.org.

Catholic School Technology needs are greater than ever

There's very little “normal” going on this year, but we're trying our best to get there. One thing that is normal, but abnormally large, is our Catholic schools' need for technology. With many schools needing to add distance learning capability, the Catholic United Financial Foundation gave more than \$38,000 in technology grants since October. Schools can talk to their local Sales Rep about applying for a grant in 2021.

If you want to donate directly to this critical need, scan this code with your phone's camera to be taken to the Foundation's donation page, and help make it a Merry Christmas for all!



Sales Rep Angie Jorgensen (right) delivers a Foundation Tech grant to Sarah Gavin, director of school advancement for St. Mary's School and Parish in Remsen, Iowa.





KEYS TO YOUR KINGDOM

Three documents you need to tell your kids about

John Tetzloff, CLU,
FICF, LUTCF

John Tetzloff is Catholic United's resident trainer and expert in all things estate planning. He works with our Sales Representatives and at your request directly with you to make the most of what you've got, and make sure it stays with your family. Give your local Sales Representative a call to discuss the future of your funds and attaining the keys to your kingdom, today.

Although the weather doesn't seem like winter yet, here we are amidst the holiday season. Much of the time, the holiday season sees families gathering for faith, food and fellowship. Even with the COVID pandemic, people are still finding ways to "get together" during the holidays, whether that's outdoors around a firepit or basking in the glowing warmth of a computer monitor amid a grid of our loved ones. During these times of "family," many interesting discussions occur from politics, taxes, and even death and dying.

In my many years of working with families on their "death" plans, I find the best thing we can do for our heirs is COMMUNICATE. Having the courage to communicate our wishes to our spouses, kids and our estate plan advisor is crucial to creating a good, solid plan; it can also provide for a much smoother transition once death occurs.

One of the most important discussions we can have with our heirs is about funeral and last expense planning. Without a plan, the grieving widow/widower or the children are often left with making all the decisions about funeral arrangements, church services, burial options, and finally, where the money is going to come from to pay the funeral expenses. Unfortunately, not all the kids will agree!

Using appropriate documentation, a person can communicate their wishes on these difficult decisions. You can decide, working through your local funeral home, the funeral and burial arrangements. Casket choices, cremation urns, burial plots and headstone inscriptions are all things you can pre-arrange to ease the burden on your heirs. If you wish to have your Catholic faith represented, make sure you fill out the Catholic End of Life Health Care directive, which will direct your heirs on Catholic services you wish to have from the hymns, pallbearers, Masses and readers. (There is a link and a QR code at the end of this article that you can scan to download a copy of this document.)

The pre-funding of last expenses is also vitally important. With a prefunded plan, the heirs don't have the worry or burden of finding money from the remaining estate to fund the funeral, which can cost \$10,000 or more. Preplanning your arrangements will also reduce the cost.

Catholic United Financial does not provide tax or legal advice. Discuss all tax strategies with your CPA or tax attorney.

We should also make sure we have the three crucial estate plan documents updated and in a place where the heirs can find and access them quickly. *Those three documents are a (1) Last Will and Testament, (2) Health Care Directive, and (3) Financial Power of Attorney.*

Remember, make sure all your documents mentioned above are in an easy-to-reach place and that your heirs, or at least the executor of your estate, have easy access. **Take a moment during this year's Christmas phone call or Zoom group to tell your family members where to find these critical documents.** There is nothing worse when a parent dies than no one knowing their wishes or where they can find the documents that express those wishes. By having access, you can ensure a smooth transition and help eliminate your heirs having to make the "hard" decisions.

Remember, no one should have to do this on their own. The qualified Sales Representatives at Catholic United Financial can help guide all aspects of Last Expense Planning. By assisting in gathering the information, discussing the various options, and providing applicable paperwork, we can make the Last Expense Planning process easy, understandable, and complete.

No matter the level of Funeral and Last Expense planning you complete, COMMUNICATION is the most important aspect of that plan.

The new State-of-the-Art

Catholic United has a vision for the future, and is working daily to bring it about. That future looks like more members, more access, and more capability to do the good work we do.

In early 2021, we plan to launch a direct-to-you application and delivery system for our Single Premium Youth Term policy.

With just a few easy clicks, you will be able to purchase a term policy on your children that will guarantee a death benefit through age 30; guarantee convertibility without a health screening; and provide access to all of our membership benefits, including scholarships!

RECIPES & Things

The Christmas season is a delight for all senses. Lights, sounds, even the touch of Jack Frost nipping at your nose. But nothing has the capacity to transport us like the scent of sweet treats baking. Try this super simple recipe, and don't be surprised if you can almost hear the carolers and calls of vendors at the Christkindlmarkt.

Bavarian-style Cinnamon Roasted Almonds

4 cups almonds
2 cups sugar
1 cup water
1 Tbsp cinnamon

DIRECTIONS:

First, wash your almonds. Then, add sugar, water and cinnamon to a skillet and bring to a boil, stir to combine. Add almonds and reduce heat to minimum.

Do not stop stirring. Stir constantly until sugar looks powdery on almonds. Remove from heat and immediately transfer and spread on a lined baking sheet.

Store in an airtight container and enjoy for up to two months!

For crispier almonds, after spreading on baking sheet, transfer to a 250 degree F oven and allow to cook slowly for up to an hour. Test periodically by taking out an almond or two, allowing to cool, and eating it.

Epiphany King Cake

For this, and other great activities, treats and tips for Catholic families, visit www.catholicicing.com.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED:

- 1 can oven-ready cinnamon rolls (containing 6 rolls) with classic icing
- Green, yellow and purple sugar sprinkles (To make your own with regular granulated sugar, just put some sugar in a sealable container, add a couple drops of food coloring and shake)
- A little plastic baby or a bean or something to hide in the cake (AFTER baking)

Prep: 20 min • Cook: 18 min

DIRECTIONS:

Remove cinnamon rolls from can and unroll them into six long strips.

Braid three of the strips together; then braid the other three together. You now have two braids of cinnamon roll dough.

Place one of the braids in the middle of a baking sheet and arc it to the left to form a semicircle. Use the other braid to form the right half of the circle and gently pinch the two braids together to complete your “crown.” The braid and circle shape represent the crown of a “King Cake.” Bake as directed on the cinnamon roll tin.

Once removed from the oven and safe to touch, lift an edge and hide the baby in the cake from underneath. Then drizzle icing over the cake and sprinkle the colored sugar over the warm icing. Let cool (not too much!) then slice and enjoy.

www.catholicicing.com.



The King Cake is a tradition going back to the Middle Ages. It honors the three kings who journeyed to find Jesus in the manger, and celebrates Jesus's baptism by John the Baptist. The cake is often decorated in green, gold and purple to signify faith, power and justice. The baby (or bean in many countries) hidden inside represents Jesus. **The person who finds the baby (or bean) is said to be “King for a day,” should have good luck throughout the year, and has to host the party and bake the cake the next year!**

Connecting at Christmas

What a year it's been. For more than a century, no one has lived through what we are experiencing right now. In many ways, the challenges of the COVID pandemic have brought out the best in us. We know that the inconveniences we accept aren't just for our own safety, but to protect the most vulnerable members of our society. We've reconnected with neighbors, gotten creative in staying in touch with family, and looked for new ways to support our parishes and our Catholic schools. Perhaps most of all, we've been reminded what an utter treasure our teachers and health care professionals are (with a shout-out to our food service industry and delivery drivers).

With all that's gone on this year, and all that is likely yet to come, we wish you serenity and sanctuary this Christmas. May God bless you all in these waning days of 2020, and provide His divine love, protection and comfort to you in 2021.



Yule Sleigh with These Dad Jokes

How do sheep tell each other "Merry Christmas?" - *Fleece Navidad*

What do you get when you combine a Christmas tree with an iPad?

- *A pineapple*

What's the name of the most ill-mannered reindeer? - *RUDE-olph*

In what years does New Year's Day come before Christmas? - *EVERY year*

What's the difference between the regular alphabet, and the Christmas alphabet? - *The Christmas alphabet has NO-EL*

Take a moment...

This Christmas, we all find ourselves altering holiday traditions, or scrapping them altogether thanks to the pandemic. But as in all things, when God shuts a door, he opens a window. Take advantage of the extra time at home this year. Focus on the nativity and teach your family this Prayer before a creche.

Lord Jesus, together with the shepherds we draw near to your crib. We contemplate you, wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in the manger.

O Babe of Bethlehem, we adore you in silence with Mary, your ever-Virgin Mother. To you be glory and praise forever, O Savior of the world. Amen.



Read the Nativity Story

Gospel of Luke 1:26 – 2:20

Gospel of Matthew 1:18 – 2:12

Re-reading the Nativity story in the Bible can bring us all closer together and remind us of the holiday's true meaning. The Nativity story has two versions, one with "wise men" and a star, one with shepherds and an angelic host. Read them both and reacquaint your family with the miracle.

COVID Grace Period for Required IRA Distributions Ends in 2021

As you are aware, the IRS has indicated that taxpayers who otherwise would have been required to take a Required Minimum Distribution (RMD) for their IRAs for 2020 can skip the distribution for the 2020 tax year. This means for this year you don't have to take the minimum distribution and pay taxes on it. This also means, assuming the RMD is required for next year (2021), the amount you will be required to take will be based on the balance of your IRAs at the end of 2020. If you have not taken a 2020 distribution, you may be required to distribute more than you expect in 2021 and pay taxes on the distribution.

Virtually the only way currently to avoid paying taxes on your traditional IRA distributions is to make Qualified Charitable Distributions (QCDs) directly from your IRA to the appropriate charities of your choosing. This is still true for the tax year 2020. You can make the Qualified Charitable Distributions this year, avoid taxes, not increase your adjusted gross income, and lower your year end IRA balance which will lower your RMD amount for 2021.

You may want to consider making additional charitable donations for 2020 or even making your annual 2021 charitable donations to places such as your Church or the Catholic School now instead of next year. This can help avoid taxes and lower your RMD for next year and years to come. There is still time to request a QCD for 2020. The transfer needs to be made by your IRA

provider by December 31, 2020. If you choose to provide Qualified Charitable Distributions for this tax year, make sure your IRA provider understands you intend to claim the distribution for tax purposes in the current year (2020).

Contact your Catholic United Financial Sales Representative to learn more about using your Qualified Charitable Distributions from IRAs. Or contact Bob Heuermann directly at Foundation@catholicunited.org or at (651) 765-6548. We would be happy to show you how to pay less on your taxes and give more than you thought possible to the Church or charities of your choice.

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*Merry Christmas, and happiness to you
in the New Year!*