

The Nome Static

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Dear Friend,

Warm greetings in this Advent season! As the days grow shorter and Christmas approaches, we reflect on the deeper meaning of this special time.

Advent marks the start of a new liturgical year, Cycle B, with a focus on the Gospel of Mark. It's a season of waiting, growth, and hope, centered on themes of hope, peace, joy, and love. In our remote corner of the world, we eagerly await the return of the sun, symbolizing hope and new beginnings. We light Advent candles and sing "O Come, O Come Emmanuel" as a sign of anticipation for the gifts God brings.

We are deeply grateful for your generosity and friendship. You make a positive impact in Western Alaska, and your contributions are invaluable. If you have any prayer intentions or simply want to connect with us, we would love to hear from you. Your connection and support are vital to our mission.

New Bishop Goes Live

The Catholic Diocese of Fairbanks received a new bishop on Thursday, October 12, with the ordination of the Rev. Steven Maekawa, OP, as the seventh bishop of the diocese. Hundreds of Catholic faithful from around Alaska gathered at Fairbanks' Carlson Center to attend the ordination Mass.

Maekawa was appointed Bishop of Fairbanks in July. He was ordained a Dominican priest in



Top: Photo of the sea ice in front of Nome, Alaska. Photo from the KNOM archives.

Middle: Bishop Maekawa pictured at his ordination Mass. Photo by Father Bart Hutcherson, OP, used with permission.

Bottom: Bishop Maekawa pictured in a bush plane traveling to Emmonak, a rural community. Photo by Bishop Maekawa, used with permission.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

KNOM: Faith, Inspiration, News and Information for Western Alaska

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

1998 and served as pastor of Holy Family Old Cathedral in Anchorage since 2016. As Bishop of Fairbanks, Maekawa will shepherd more than 12,000 faithful in 46 parishes spread over an area one and a half times the size of Texas. Most priests in the diocese are missionaries from other countries.

Lala Hunt traveled to Fairbanks for the ordination. She and her husband, Deacon Dominic Hunt, serve Sacred Heart Parish in the village of Emmonak. She described how unlike urban parishes, rural parishes often have no priest assigned to them: "The priest numbers are very weak and have dwindled. So we're having to lead Sunday services, do sacramental prep, funeral services, it entails a lot and we're very few."

Bishop Maekawa says he looks forward to visiting parishes in the diocese to understand what it is like to be a church in rural Alaska: "I can't make good decisions without first formulating and understanding. And people have been so gracious and offered the time, their insights, showing and sharing the community, sharing different experiences [with me]." He spent the months leading up to his ordination visiting several rural communities across the Diocese of Fairbanks.

KNOM broadcast the ordination Mass live to listeners across Western Alaska.



Above: Bishop Maekawa pictured with his family. Photo by Father Bart Hutcherson, OP, used with permission.

Celebrating Exceptional Achievements

The Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN) honored remarkable Alaska Native individuals and families at the President's Awards ceremony, held on Friday, October 20. These awards recognize outstanding achievements across various fields that exemplify Alaska Native values and dedication to public service. Two of the esteemed awards found their way to Nome.

Etta Tall received the prestigious Della Keats "Healing Hands" award for her accomplishments in providing healing and healthcare to her community. This award is a tribute to the pioneering work of Dr. Della Keats, a visionary in the field of tribal medicine in Northwest Alaska.

In her acceptance speech, Tall shared her inspiration, recounting a visit from Dr. Ted Mala, an Iñupiaq doctor, to her hometown of Little Diomed during her teenage years. Her fascination with herbal medicine emerged when she sought relief for a chest cold and, receiving no medication, experimented with stinkweed, extracting its healing potential. This experience ignited her curiosity about the medicinal properties of local flora and their potential to alleviate various ailments. Her contributions have had a profound impact on the well-being of her community.

The Walter Soboleff "Warriors of Light" award was bestowed upon the Hoogendorn brothers, Oliver "Tusagvik" and Wilson "Mungnak." This honor recognizes individuals who have unified, uplifted, and enriched the spirits of Alaska Native people. Earlier this year, the Hoogendorn brothers secured victory in the USA Network's "Race to Survive: Alaska" television series, showcasing their resilience. In 2017, they were the first to summit Denali during that climbing season, displaying their unwavering determination.

The brothers attributed their success to the steadfast support from their friends, family, and significant others, emphasizing that success is never achieved in isolation.



Top: Oliver and Wilson Hoogendorn beam with pride as they receive a standing ovation from the crowd. Photo by Matt Faubion/AKPM, used with permission.

Bottom: Etta Tall stands on the stage, surrounded by friends and family. Photo by Matt Faubion/AKPM, used with permission.

Morning Prayer

Dear Jesus,

You said "Don't judge other folks unless you wanna be judged..."
So, how bout today, right when I'm about to share some juicy bit o gossip...I take a quick look in the mirror to see if I'm perfect.

In Your Precious Name, Amen!

Sharing the Word in Western Alaska

The people of Israel hoped and longed for a day when God would come again to visit them just as he had in the past when he visited Moses on the mountain and gave him the Ten Commandments. In our season of Advent, we Christians hope and long for the day when the Lord Jesus will come again to be with us.

Today's Gospel reading comes at the very beginning of Mark's Gospel. The good news is that what the ancient prophets talked about is now coming true. God himself is on his way to his people. John the Baptist is the messenger sent by God to prepare the people for God's visit. John called the people to make a straight path and a clear trail. This means straightening out their lives by getting rid of anything that might keep God from coming close to them.

During Advent we prepare to welcome the Lord Jesus who will come at the end of time but who also come to us each day in the people we meet and in the events we face. Are we prepared to welcome the Lord whenever he comes? What might be some things that block the path for God to reach our hearts?

— Patrick Tam, 2nd Sunday of Advent, Dec 10, 2023

Preserving Indigenous Language through Social Media

In the vast landscapes of Alaska, over 20 Alaska Native languages has been handed down through generations. Yet, the last century has seen a decline in fluent speakers due to the impacts of colonization. In Nome, one woman is leveraging the power of social media to breathe new life into the Inupiaq language. Gail Smithhisler, a Nome resident, is the driving force behind the "Iñupiaq Word of the Day" Facebook and TikTok page. Gail posts daily videos on her page, where she imparts the meanings, spellings, and provides phonetic pronunciations of words and phrases from the Inupiaq language. Gail grew up listening to her grandparents and elders in Nome conversing in Iñupiaq.

In her quest to reach a broader audience, Gail expanded to TikTok in 2020. Her videos have garnered tens of thousands of views and thousands of followers. She notes that TikTok, being popular among younger demographics, bridges the generational gap in language revitalization, a crucial element in preserving the vitality of the language. She advises language learners not to be disheartened by corrections, as they usually come from a place of genuine concern, even if the delivery may not be ideal. Gail underscores the importance of persevering.



Above: Cindy's poodle Annie dreaming of becoming one of Santa's reindeer. Photo by Cindy Lentine, used with permission.

Recipe: A Christmas Treat For Your Dog

This recipe is Annie's favorite treat for Christmas and makes about 3 dozen servings.

Ingredients:

- 1 can of Wild Alaskan salmon, drained
- 2 cups of brown rice flour
- 2 eggs

Directions:

1. Mix everything together until it's well blended.
2. Make small balls and drop them on parchment paper.
3. Flatten the balls out and then bake at 350 degrees for about 35 minutes.
4. Store in the freezer and take out a few at a time to thaw in the refrigerator. Will stay fresh in the refrigerator for 3 days.



Above: Photo of the Alaska salmon doggy treats. Photo by Cindy Lentine, used with permission.

We pray that people living with disabilities may be at the center of attention in society, and that institutions may offer inclusive programs which value their active participation.

— Pope Francis' prayer intention for December 2023

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