

Bishop John Smith of the Trenton Diocese, rear left, is escorted by a Knights of Columbus honor guard to lead a blessing of the nativity scene in front of the State House in Trenton.

Staff photo by  
Randall Hagadorn



## Celebrating 'reason for the season'

By **KIMBERLY VAN HAVERE**  
Special to The Times

TRENTON — As the distant sun peeked through the bare branches near the State House steps, the Knights of Columbus celebrated a long-standing tradition.

About 20 past and present faithful Knights from cities across the state joined government officials, priests and pedestrians to celebrate the real meaning of Christmas and to bless a nativity scene on the capital building grounds.

It has been a Knights' practice, in Trenton, to celebrate the holiday with prayer, blessings and recognition of one particular family: Joseph, Mary and the baby Jesus.

The Knights' custom in Trenton dates back roughly two decades, but lapsed for some time. Two years ago, the Knights revived the Catholic ritual, and since then have honorably fulfilled their purpose of demonstrating Christian faith in the community.

Knights State Deputy Reginald F. Beckett proclaimed the significance of spreading tidings to the youth in the community. "We have to educate children about what the season

means to us," Beckett informed. "Christmas is about Christ."

As Bishop John Smith of the Trenton Diocese bestowed wishes for families and the state of New Jersey, asking for "mercy, peace, hope and love," supporters bowed their heads. They closed their eyes and joined the bishop in prayer and for the blessing of the crib displaying the "humble birth of Jesus." Smith declared, "Jesus is the reason for the season."

Past Grand Knight of Trenton Council Jerry Iacona emphasized the importance of "showing Christianity" through the nativity scene, but also acknowledged the need to respect other faiths.

When it comes to the Catholic religion, Iacona said, "We are not pushing," and with regard to other denominations, Iacona said, "we are not denying." Iacona said the best gift of the season is the "gift of love."

After the ceremony, the group met at the Trenton Knights' council home at 200 Columbus Ave. for refreshments and Christmas carols.

The nativity scene will be on display until the weekend of Jan. 8 and will be illuminated with Christmas lights each night.

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