

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 23

DO YOU SEE THE KEYSTONES?

On October 28, 1965, the last piece of the Gateway Arch in St. Louis, Missouri, was placed. The project lasted two and a half years and required scores of engineers and iron workers to follow precise measurements exactly hundreds of feet up in the air. The final piece, a 10-ton, eight-foot-wide triangular keystone, connected the two legs of the monument, holding it secure and completing the graceful arc over the city.

A keystone is the central stone at the top of an archway. Most often the last stone placed, it locks the whole thing together, providing stability and tension to keep the legs of the arch strong. See how many keystones you can find in the image. Each window and doorway has one. The child in the manger is also a keystone — Jesus is the eternal link between what was and what will be.

A keystone not only provides tension to hold two sides together, it is also a pivot point, the point at which we begin moving a different way. Where we were going up, now we begin to go down. Our Advent journey asks us to consider: What is holding us together? From where are we drawing our strength? Where are we leaning into healthy tension in our lives? How do we need to pivot from what was and is to what will be?



Today's scripture recounts the naming of John the Baptist. Born into unusual circumstances to Elizabeth and Zechariah who were well past childbearing years, John is not the keystone, he is the messenger telling us to take heed and watch for the Christ who is to come. However, John's story warns us that the one who is to come may not be what we expect. He may require us to pivot. Just as John's birth, name and ministry are highly unconventional, Jesus, too, will be wholly unexpected and unconventional in birth and in ministry.

Christ is our keystone as both a pivot point and stabilizing force. In Catholic health care we are trained to watch for the unexpected, to pivot when need be. Even as we go, nimble on our feet and ready to shift, we lean into the steadiness of the one who calls us to our work.

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