





# Saint Mary's Parish

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December 25, 2020  
Feast of the Nativity

Dear Members of the St. Mary's Parish Family,

Merry Christmas! I hope this message finds you healthy, holy and at peace with God and neighbor. The Nativity Image above appeared on a Christmas card I received this year. I was struck by its historical accuracy, since in fact stables in the Holy Land at the time of Jesus were usually little more than shallow caves in hillsides, the entrance sometimes covered by a leather tarp to shield the animals from the worst of the weather.

I also found the scene to be very timely - so much darkness surrounding Mary, Joseph and the newborn Christ. Since the Pandemic struck last March, darkness has been ever present. Shadows of sickness, fear, disruption, anger and loss have crowded in on us, affecting all aspects of our days. Many of us can relate to those three small figures huddled together in the vast dark.

Which is why Christmas is even more of a gift this year than usual. At Christmas we celebrate the birth of He Who said, *"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life."* (John 8:12)

That Holy Family - together in the dark of night with only the rudest of shelter - has Christ as its center. Mary and Joseph are able to find joy and courage in the very midst of trial because they have Jesus there with them. And so it is for us. As long as we have the Lord in our lives, we can face whatever comes.

In the beautiful words of St. Paul, *"I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor present things, nor future things, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."* (Romans 8:38-39)

In these perilous times, we turn to one another, especially to those we love, for comfort and support. And there we will find some strength and consolation. But it is only by welcoming Christ into the very heart of our homes and lives that we can truly keep hope alive. In Him we can prevail against any evil. In Him we can find the peace and joy which do not depend on present circumstance, but by knowing that we belong to the Lord of Love. He is the One Who on the Cross faced every agony this world can inflict, and triumphed over them in the Resurrection. He is the One to Whom belongs the final victory, the Light of the World against Whom darkness cannot stand.

This Christmas, commit anew to invite Jesus into your life. If He has been on the periphery, allow Him to take center place. If He has been relegated to Sundays, make a return to daily prayer. If prayer and worship are not part of your shared family experience, then find ways to make them so. Remember that the light of Christ is a gift that must be shared if it is to keep burning in our own hearts. So extend to others the same mercy, patience and generosity the Lord has given you.

St. Padre Pio once said that, *"The most beautiful act of faith is the one made in darkness."* Dear brothers and sisters, the times are dark. Now is the hour for faith. Now is the moment to place our trust wholly in the Saviour of the world.

God bless you!

Rev. Mark J. Coiro  
Pastor