

Christmas 2020



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A CELESTIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

**Angels, announce with shouts of mirth
Christ who brings new life to earth.
Set every peak and valley humming
With the word, the Lord is coming.
People, look east and sing today:
Love, the Lord, is on the way.**

I'm a sucker for surprise parties. I know. Most people act surprised because they had been tipped off earlier. However, there is still an electric sense in the air when someone steps into a room, turns on the lights, and is met with a huge SURPRISE and the whole gang sings Happy Birthday, or He's a Jolly Good Fellow, or whatever song the occasion demands.

The whole earth was a part of a surprise party. Can you imagine the shepherds in the fields at night when all of a sudden the skies light with a celestial radiance and a chorus of angels shouted "Surprise?!" Well, okay, maybe they didn't shout surprise; but, I'm sure that the shepherds were quite surprised nonetheless. Shocked or stunned might be more the word that just surprised.

The angels announced a joyful message: the long-awaited Savior was born! That happy message has resounded throughout the earth for over two thousand years already and it still hasn't gotten old. There is still a joy in singing our Christmas songs because we are singing the birthday songs of Jesus Christ.

The long-awaited day has arrived. At your Christmas celebrations today enjoy the time you spend with family and friends; but, at the same time, remember the real reason for today. We celebrate the birth of a God who loved us so much that He became one of us.

Love, the Lord, is here!

FAITH ACTION: Find ways to ring out your joy in the Lord's birth this day.

Fr. Mike



"For behold, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For today in the city of David a savior has been born for you who is Christ the Lord." (Luke 2:10-11)

When I think about Christmas and all that surrounds the holiday, I think about the joy of gathering with family and friends, coming to midnight Mass and recalling the reason for the season. I think about how we feel drawn to help those in our family or community struggling and recognize that we are all connected and need one another.

This past year of 2020, we have experienced so much change. I look towards the good from this past year (and there has been good) in the midst of the struggles. I have seen families that are usually going in one-hundred different directions, spending time together.

I have witnessed first-hand people caring and being concerned for their elderly relatives, friends, and neighbors. I have observed a group of dedicated volunteers calling our 3,000+ families here at St. Thomas More to make sure that they have food and can pay their bills.

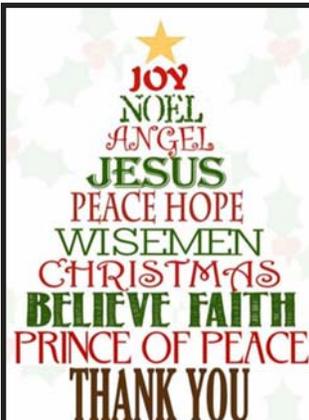
What I will remember about 2020 is not the bad, not the difficulties (they are present and real in our lives). However, I will remember how people have gone outside of themselves to help one another; to call an elderly neighbor, bring food to a struggling family, and spend time as a family.

On this celebration of Christmas, the Birth of our Lord Jesus Christ, we are reminded that God is present in our lives. He has become one of us; He knows our struggles, He knows our difficulties, and he does not leave us to fend for ourselves. He has come among us to help us on this journey of life.

As we start a New Year, let us move forward in the confidence of Christ as brothers and sisters.

In the Love of Christ,

Fr. Declan



Because of the pandemic, this year has been very strange and our liturgies have had to be modified to ensure social distance. To all who may have played a part in decorating the church or helping with our Masses, I give my heartfelt thanks. I especially want to thank Fr. Declan, our Deacons, our MCs, and our musicians for their extremely hard work!



There is beauty in celebrating our liturgical seasons. Advent helps us to prepare for the second coming of Jesus as we look forward to Christmas, his first coming, His Incarnation.

The pandemic has done great havoc in our lives. It has been a challenging year for all. A lot of us are overcome with fear. Some have lost their job and unable to sufficiently support their family needs and can even lose their home. There are those who became seriously ill and others have lost their lives. Families stayed away from visiting one another and special holiday celebrations have been cancelled. But most importantly, our spiritual lives have suffered much. Many of us for varying health reasons, have been unable to attend mass in church and receive Jesus in the Eucharist. It is true that we can attend mass virtually, but it is not the same as being present in the church. And we also miss our brothers and sisters of our church family.

Jesus is the light of the world. He is our hope and source of strength. He is Emmanuel. God with us. If we can empty of ourselves and let God into our minds and hearts, we can see what He has done for us. There is a lot of goodness happening in us and among us in spite of the pandemic.

Families are more concerned of one another. Our prayers, sacrifices, and the words of the scripture draw us closer to God and we are changed. We are also more aware of people around us. It is no longer just for me but for us. We think of other people's needs, giving a lending hand to the best of our ability. We comfort those who are lonely by calling them and pray for those who are sick. These might seem insignificant but rest assured these are pleasing in God's eyes and worthy of His blessings.

The pandemic will end. Our life will get better. But we cannot rid of all our troubles by our selves. Let us allow God to take charge. His love and mercy is our only hope and strength. God bless!!!!

Merry Christmas and a Blessed, Healthy, and Peaceful 2021!

Deacon Napoleon and Lynn Tabion



This year of HOPE brings many thoughts to mind. The HOPE for peace.

The HOPE for health and wellness. The HOPE that our world heals and comes together. The HOPE that we continue to do what's best for others. As I reflect on this year,

I offer prayers of thanksgiving to all those who have made sacrifices for the greater good. May the peace and joy of Christmas live in your hearts all year long.

Merry Christmas & Happy New Year!
Principal of STMS
Dr. Samantha Hofferth-Francis

On my desk in my office, I have a statue of the Infant Jesus of Prague. Traditionally, the Infant Jesus holds the world in His left hand, with His right hand raised in blessing. My Infant Jesus statue is missing His right hand, and is unable to bless us. When I first picked this statue up from a giveaway table, I almost put it back, because of the missing hand. Then, I realized that Jesus never rejects us, regardless of our imperfections or defects.



I keep this statue on my desk, not only to remind me that Jesus loves each of us, no matter how imperfect we may be, but also to remind us that He asks us to be His hands in the world. In the words of St. Teresa of Avila, "Christ has no body now but yours. No hands, no feet on earth but yours." It is our job to be Christ to our brothers and sisters.

This Christmas season, as the Infant Jesus comes to all of us in the manger, He asks us to help Him by being His hands for others. My prayer for each of you this Christmas is that you are given the opportunity to be the hands of Jesus to others in their times of need. I also pray that you allow others to be the hands of Jesus to you whenever you are in need. If you can do this, then the Infant born in the manger, born to save us from our sins, will truly be born in our hearts and in the hearts of those whom we serve as the hands of Jesus. May God bless you and yours this Christmas Season,

**Miss Emily Hackett,
Director of Religious Education**



Christmas 2020

O come, O come Emmanuel, and God is with us this day. For today the Baby Jesus is born to save us all. Today we rejoice at our Savior's coming.

It has been an interesting year. It has been a year filled with many twists and turns. So many more than we could have imagined and yet by the grace of God we have made it through.

Our four evangelists of the Gospels tell us the story of Jesus among us. Each in their own way and from their own perspective. We hear them, each of us, with our own hearts. God be with us.

Let us thank all those that have helped keep us safe during this most interesting of years.

Merry Christmas and a Happy and Healthy New Year!

Deacon Dave and Kathy Kapala



One of the themes of the Advent Season might well be that of ‘journey.’ we literally see Jesus on a journey – walking along the shore of the Sea of Galilee, but more so we see ourselves on that ‘journey’ in order to be in the presence of Jesus. Every moment of our lives can be part of our journey towards Jesus, and this season might well be described as renewing ourselves for the journey. In our Church Calendar, the year ‘ends’ we have now begun a new Liturgical Year – introduced by the Season of Advent. Perhaps in the context of this strange and unpredictable year of 2020, this is a welcome development, for certainly most of us will be happy to see a new start to life. As we move towards Christmas and the celebration of his coming into our world, we will be able to look forward into all that is new and beckons us, and also to look back over the year that has been 2020. The tone of our prayers, the colors of our celebrations, and the Word of God each week will certainly orient us into a spirit of expectation so that we might prepare our hearts to welcome Our Lord once more into our world.

In our wider society, the Season of Advent can be swallowed up by the end of calendar year and our planning for and anticipation of Christmas Day, preparation for travel and perhaps especially this year – a desire to see the end of 2020! So the challenge for us may well be to ‘stay in the moment’ and savor what we have been given to orient our thinking, our prayers and ultimately our hearts, towards Jesus and the gift of his life in our world. We come to Jesus as we are – in all degrees of need, but we know that His heart holds only concern for us. Our response to Jesus coming into our midst might well be summarized in his challenge to the disciples. What can we offer to those in need around us? Even from our own meager resources we can assist and enable his mission to grow and come to fruition in our world.

Let us be about this task – with the Lord to provide for us we will truly have more resources available to us than we can ever imagine needing. As we gather to celebrate Christmas, many events, public and private, touch our lives in different ways. Especially the pandemic No doubt this year has brought joys and sadness in different measure to each person, all coloring our memories of 2020.

Traditionally, we see Christmas as a time of peace and joy, a time to celebrate with family, with friends and loved ones. We do hope that your Christmas will have something of that peace, joy and celebration. Such joyful celebrations may not be possible for some. You may have lost a loved one since last Christmas, or you may be overburdened by money worries, family problems or for many other reasons. It’s our fondest hope that we can, thru the grace of God, show someone they’re loved this Christmas. May God bless us and be with us.

**Merry Christmas to all,
Deacon Joe and Joyce Stodola**



What a year 2020 has been! I don’t think anyone could have predicted all of the challenges that we were to face. A pandemic, wildfires, hurricanes, economic uncertainty, social unrest, riots and a deepening political divide has consumed us. Throughout the year, the phrase “Do not be afraid” periodically floats in my head. It is the opening passage from Luke 2:10-11, announcing the birth of the Lord. There are many references to “fear not” in the Bible.

When the country was first closing down in March, my mother was in hospice in a nursing home. I made the decision to bring her to my home. I was fearful if this was the correct decision. In my head I kept hearing, “Do not be afraid, I am with you”. It was challenging but with the help of my husband, daughter, friends and hospice, it was the right decision. I shared moments with my mother that I never would have had. I trusted that God would be there, and he was at that time and throughout the year.

I have always found Christmas to be a time to pray and reflect on the year and to look at the possibilities for the future. While at Mass the other day, I realized that the banners behind the altar at church could help me to put the future in perspective. I have:

Hope that the vaccine will be successful and that we can put the pandemic behind us. I pray that we can address social inequalities and political differences so we can return to a state of Peace and harmony. I look forward to seeing Joy as people return to church and work and are able to get back on their feet and once again go outside without fear and be with the ones that they Love.

Christmas is a time to remember that God sent his only Son to save us. Put your faith and trust in God. Remember He tells us, “Do not be afraid I am with you.”

Wishing you and your family hope, peace, joy and love this Christmas and throughout 2021.

**Noreen Bickel
School President
Parish Director of Finance**

Brothers and Sisters,

It is in this beautiful season that we want to thank our parish family for your continued prayers and well wishes as Deacon Dan continues to battle his dreaded cancer.



Our prayer is that we make every day a Christmas Day – give from your heart, care for others and live in peace.

We wish all of you a wonderful and Blessed Christmas and the very best in the New Year.

**Lady Mary Lou Zurawski, LHS
Deacon Daniel Zurawski, KHS**