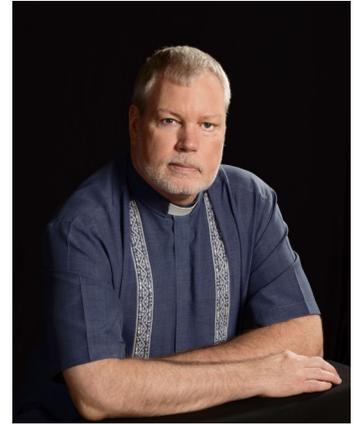# *Pastor's Page*

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

The rhythm, the pace and the focus of Christmas that the Church observes and celebrates is in a number of ways significantly different from the way our secular culture observes and celebrates Christmas.

For the secular culture, 'Christmas time' began way back after Thanksgiving—some would say after Halloween—as Christmas carols began to be broadcast over the radio stations and Christmas decorations and advertisements began to appear in the stores. In the Church's tradition and mode of observance, the Christmas season did not begin until our liturgical celebrations on Christmas Eve (December 24th), and the Christmas season does not end until our celebration of the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord, which falls this year on January 10th.

For the great Sacred Tradition of Catholicism, one that is shared by many other Christian branches as well, Christmas is a season through which God's people reflect upon the mystery of the Incarnation—God's Word Made Flesh—as it unfolds in a series of events and aspects which step-by-step unpack its significance for us: The Nativity (December 24th/25th), the Holy Family (December 27th), the Motherhood of the Blessed Virgin Mary (January 1st), the Epiphany (January 3rd) and the Baptism of the Lord (January 10th).

In the secular culture, Christmas ends on December 26th, as the post-Christmas sales begin, and as the Christmas carols fade and the decorations begin to come down. For us as Catholics, Christmas has just begun, and it continues to be honored, celebrated and observed in the Church—and, I hope, in our hearts—for at least until the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord, and, I pray, well beyond that as well. May all our families, and the human family as well, have a truly blessed Christmas (season) and a New Year filled with new hope and holy purpose.

Grace and peace to each and all,

Fr. Kevin