

## Christ, Our Joy and Hope

My dear friends in Christ,

**Merry Christmas!** Among the many desires of parents today, the safety of their children is non-negotiable, a requirement. For safety, parents put up rail guards, install security systems, ensure that their children are well buckled up in their car seats, draw up and teach their children safety rules, set boundaries and curfews, and ensure that their children are familiar with the family emergency contact list. A schoolteacher could lose his/her job, a sports coach could be dismissed, a politician could be voted out of office, individuals are prosecuted and jailed if they compromise the safety of a child. All these safety measures help us to understand the importance and need for safety, especially of our children.

No rational human being would put their child through what the child Jesus endured on that first Christmas night. Mary and Joseph had to travel from Galilee to Bethlehem on foot for several days on rough dusty roads. Imagine the silence of the night broken only by the cry of wolves and bleating of sheep, the fear that robbers could strike at any time, the anxiety of finding themselves stranded in the middle of nowhere with no place to lay their heads, the stench of a cave used as barn with the overwhelming smell of manure, the anguish of a teenaged Mary giving birth to her first child alone in a cave with her carpenter husband providing whatever help he can. You would think that God should have put in place all the necessary safety measure to ensure that His Son – the Savior of the world who comes to us as a vulnerable infant –receives a safe and fitting welcome as most parents do, but it was in life at its most dismal point that Christ chose to enter our human experience and sanctify it.

The joy of celebrating the birth of Christ gives us hope that God is with us. In the Word made flesh, we see that God is no stranger to the human condition. In the infant born in a stable to simple working people, we come to understand that God who is infinitely great is also one of us. Thus, we sing with the angels: **Glory to God in the highest!** As we sing joy to the world this season, let us find ways to bring that joy to individual hearts.

### Appreciation

- 2020 came with unprecedented challenges, especially COVID-19, yet Holy Trinity and St. John's were blessed in many ways. Our greatest blessing is all of you, our parishioners who support our church financially, those who volunteer countless hours to serve as sacristans, altar servers, lectors, ushers, gardeners, PAC members, pastoral and finance council members, maintenance persons, musicians, and cleaners. There are those who clean and change the light bulbs; provide supplies we need for Mass; our catechists Lisa Turner, Josh Freitag, and Kathy Cowan who educate the children, youth, and adults of our parish in the practice of faith; parish office staff Cynthia Kroll, Teresa Roberts, and Barbara Farey who work tirelessly, mostly behind the scenes, to ensure the smooth flow of the liturgical, pastoral, and administrative life of the parish. Your love for Christ, your generous hearts and dedication are extraordinary. Thank you.
- I would also like to extend my profound gratitude to Eric Quella, who volunteered countless hours to work on the church bathrooms, landscaping in front of the rectory, and other maintenance projects. I thank Judy Crowe for the new blinds on the right windows of the church.
- I am very grateful to the Altar Society and the many parishioners who helped decorate our church and parish hall for Christmas. I especially extend my profound gratitude to Alice and Sarah Stadelman for their time and talent that have made our church look spectacularly beautiful.
- We were also blessed to have the Knights of Columbus of our parish clean the local Post Office, distribute food boxes to those in need in Bandon, serve as ushers during Mass, and sanitize our church after each Mass. They pledged to make the Good News of Christ more visible in our community through the witness of their lives. Their commitment inspires us. Thank you, Knights.
- Members of our parish Outreach Ministry have made extraordinary difference in our parish this year. When we couldn't gather for Mass in the early months of COVID-19, they called to check on all parishioners. When Masses resumed, they not only called to sign everyone up but also stood at the entrance of the church to welcome everyone in. This was not an easy service, but they carried it out with dedication and love. We are profoundly grateful to them.
- You may be wondering what is in front of the rectory. The spectacular sculpture is a scene from the Gospel of John 21:1-14, where Jesus, after his resurrection, appeared a third time to seven of his apostles at the Sea of Tiberias and told them to put their fishing net on the other side of the boat. The apostles did and caught plenty of fish. As far as we know, this sculpture exists no other place in the world. It is one of a kind.
- On behalf of our parish, I would like to thank Tom and Sarah Stadelman for financing this entire project and gifting it to our parish. Our hope is that this scene not only serves as an attraction in Bandon but draws people who visit here to God. I believe this will inspire other projects in our parish. Whatever you can do to make our church, your parish the best it can be, never hesitate.

We give thanks to God for sustaining us in 2020, and we ask for his graces to make 2021 a better year. I wish you and your loved ones a Merry Christmas and a Holy, Happy and Healthy New Year.

--Fr. Anthony Ahamefule  
Parish Priest