

As we wind down the celebrations of Christmas Day, I want to reflect on the beauty of our Roman Catholic tradition in which we celebrate Christmas for almost 3 weeks! A Jesuit friend of mine takes full advantage of this and writes his Christmas letter to friends and family the week after Christmas, and it always is a welcome reflection after all of the activity leading up to December 25. His letter is also a reminder that the Catholic Church offers us many things to celebrate over these next few weeks.

Right now, we are in what is called the Octave of Christmas – as the name implies, it is an 8-day celebration of the birth of Jesus, during which we honor many of his apostles and the Holy Family:

- Dec. 26 is the feast of **St. Stephen**, who was the first martyr.
- Today, we celebrate the **Feast of the Holy Family**. This feast is a great time to reflect on the gifts of family – no matter what form it takes – and revel in its glorious imperfection.
- If Dec. 27 wasn't a Sunday this, year, we'd be celebrating the feast of **St. John, Apostle and Evangelist**. His writings give us insight into the many ways Jesus was our Savior and Lord by his own witness and being at the foot of the cross, taking in Mary as his own mother, and finding the empty tomb on Easter morning.
- The **Feast of the Holy Innocents** is on Dec. 28. This day is when we remember all of those infants, who by the Gospel of Matthew's account, were slaughtered in Herod's rampage to find the new King.
- On Friday, as we ring in the New Year, we celebrate **Mary, Mother of God** and the **World Day of Peace**. **We will be having Masses here at Holy Name of Jesus at 5:30 on Dec. 31 and 9 a.m. on Jan. 1.**

While we may be overjoyed to ring out 2020, let us look ahead to the promise of a new year as a Holy Name of Jesus family, where we have many exciting new initiatives to look forward to and we can come together more as a parish family.

I wish you many blessings in this New Year and I pray that you are able to celebrate as the carol *O Holy Night* proclaims in its verses and refrains:

*A thrill of hope the weary world rejoices,
For yonder breaks a new and glorious morn;*

*He knows our need, To our weakness no stranger!
Behold your King! Before Him lowly bend!*

Truly He taught us to love one another;

*His law is Love and His Gospel is Peace;
Chains shall he break, for the slave is our brother;
And in his name all oppression shall cease,*