



## Christmas 2020

*“The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; upon those who dwelt in the land of gloom a light has shone. You have brought them abundant joy and great rejoicing...”*  
(Isaiah 9:1-2)

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ:

*“Abundant joy and great rejoicing”* -- Isaiah’s prayer is most welcome! We have been dwelling in the land of gloom for months. We are restless and ready to hear the Advent message of hope. We yearn to embrace once again the Christmas story of light, peace, and joy.

The Feast of Christmas is the time when it is the easiest to fight against discouragement and darkness. As we gaze upon the Infant Babe in the manger, God makes Himself so close that our hearts cannot remain fearful, anxious or troubled. As Pope Francis preached on the First Sunday of Advent, “Advent is the season for remembering the closeness of God who came down to dwell in our midst.” The Christmas hymns and the customs that surround this Feast are imbued with the profound joy of being saved—such Good News! Knowing that we are so loved and saved by God, we shiver with hope and joy before the nativity scene.

The birth of Jesus comes about because of the extraordinary faith of His mother Mary. Several months ago, the Diocese of Ogdensburg was consecrated to St. Joseph, her husband. He accepted the fact that Jesus is indeed the promised and long-awaited Savior. We desire the trust and deep faith that Mary and Joseph lived.

In the quiet and calm of sleep, Joseph’s life was open to God’s regenerative and sustaining love. The decisiveness with which Joseph acts upon his dreams reveals a man who already walks with God. Joseph will believe the angel’s words, and this belief will sustain him in the face of challenging demands and arduous conditions.

In the unique demands made upon us in this pandemic, we, too, are determined to be open to God’s regenerative and sustaining love. We, like Joseph, want to walk with the One Who bids us, “Follow Me.” May the Christ Child bring you and your loved ones the Gift of Love, the Blessing of Hope and the Promise of Peace. A blessed Christmas and joy-filled New Year!

Faithfully yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Terry R. LaValley  
Bishop of Ogdensburg