

# A Word From Fr. Tom Niehaus

December 22, 2019

## Good News for All

In the stillness of a crisp early morning, awakened to the fading sliver of moon casting a pale light it became clearer upon the shadows of my own understanding how Our Lord came to save us. I placed my hand on the cave wall where my night was spent in prayer and waiting to rejoice in the Christmas mystery in this Land they call Holy.

Years ago as a seminarian I had the opportunity to have celebrated Christmas Eve in the Holy Land and to do so in a cave. After singing Christmas Carols and celebrating the birth of Jesus in the Holy Mass of Christmas Night, to the caves I went to gaze upon the heavens and contemplate the prayer and wonder of shepherds and common people who lived in the region around Bethlehem. Angel chorus proclaiming the "Glory to God in the Highest," and all creation gathered near the Babe at Bethlehem to see the wonder of God-is-with-us. My heart is filled with gratitude today as it was during the encounter I had then as a seminary student for all that the Father in love has done for us. "O come, ye Christian people! Let us see the prodigy that stupefies all thought and holds it in suspense; then let us devoutly adore, and sing our hymns with hearts full of faith. This day there has come to Bethlehem a Maid that is to give birth to God (Christmas Antiphon)!" The birth of Christ in Bethlehem is a cause for great rejoicing! Jesus is God and in the womb of Mary goes door to door in the midst of His people to find a place to enter into our world, but no one will receive Him. For our Lord to be born He must be received in a humble crib in a smelly, primitive and poor cave. In the presence of Joseph and Mary with the noises and movements of animals close by, the King of kings and the Lord of lords makes His grand entrance. We too have an opportunity to approach the cave at Bethlehem anew in 2019 with hearts filled with longing and expectation! What wonder will fill our eyes and hearts as we look upon the Christ-child? What happiness will fill our souls with elation as we cry out with joy and gladness our songs of praise? Bend the knee this Christmas with humility and love at the manger and pay homage to the newborn King! May He find a place for His love in our hearts and dwell there forever.



## Invite Someone to Celebrate

Christmas is a special time to gather with family and friends. As you gather this Christmas with your loved ones please look out for the elderly and those who are alone this Christmas. Please reach out if you are able and invite them to your table. There is no reason for any person or family in our area to go without a place of celebration. Maybe this will cause you to go outside your comfort zone, or maybe it will be an open door to someone who feels that there is "no room at the inn" for them.

## Peace in the Holy Land

Please remember to pray for peace in the Holy Land. The fighting and violence still continues between Israel and Palestine. How sad that the birthplace of the Prince of Peace is one of the deadliest places to live. As a result of the fighting and danger many Christians have moved from the Holy Land and our Christian presence is in jeopardy there. Jesus bring peace to the land you consecrated by your life.

## Gratitude

Thank you for your kindness to me during the past 6 months as your new parish priest here at St. Patrick, Holy Redeemer & St. Canice. I am grateful for the welcome you have given me and the generosity you have shown to me through your support, prayers, love, invitations, food and gifts. It is a great joy to serve as a priest in our area parish cluster!

Merry Christmas!

Fr. Tom Niehaus