

Dear Parishioners and Friends,

It occurred to me as I settled down to write this Christmas message to you that the greatest thing that we need in our lives, this and every season, is to know that **the Lord is Emmanuel - God with us!** This is the message of Christmas and the basic message of our Faith. I like the way the Archbishop of Philadelphia, Charles J. Chaput, described it.

**“WHAT BEGINS IN THE STABLE ENDS IN OUR SALVATION. THAT’S WHY WE CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS, AND IT’S THE BEST AND ONLY REASON THE HUMAN HEART NEEDS.”**

**Jesus is with us!** This is what our **children** really need to know. Jesus is not only with the Babe in Bethlehem, but He is also the Son who was born to live for us and to die for our sins. Christ is the missing piece to life. Without Him our lives are incomplete. With Him our lives, even when it is difficult, painful, confusing or disappointing, make sense.

**Jesus is with us!** This is what our **middle and high school youth** and **college age young people** need to know too. In the middle of their trials, identity and gender issues, betrayals by friends, struggles to find their way in the world and in exploring dreams for a great future, the Babe in Bethlehem, now the enthroned Christ in Heaven, is with them. **He will never abandon them.** His salvation gives hope to them and to each of us.

**Jesus is with us!** This is the message of hope to our **single people**, and **single-again parishioners** (because of divorce, separation or the death of a spouse), and **young married people** and to our **families with children** and our **families without children**, **empty nesters** and **young retired folks** and **senior saints**, need to hear. Yes, even your **priests** and **deacon** needs this message. **God is with us!**

The light we all long for is the Light we have been given, Jesus, the Babe in Bethlehem. To receive Him is to be warmed by that Light and shown a new way through the trials and sorrows and even the joys that we have on our spiritual life-long journey.

Our journey as a church, God’s family, continues. And we are thankful to be on that journey. Fr. Dick Hockman, Father Steven Brosk, Deacon Maurice and I are thankful to be on the journey with you too. We thank God for you every single day. We commend you to your first and only true Pastor, the shepherd of your souls, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, the Babe in Bethlehem now enthroned in Heaven.

This Christmas Season, we want to again bow down before Him with you, happy and confident that in Him all things turn out for our good and for His glory.

**“I AM THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD. HE WHO FOLLOWS ME SHALL NOT WALK IN DARKNESS, BUT HAVE THE LIGHT OF LIFE.”**

This is God’s Christmas Gift to each of us. This is what Christmas is all about. This is our hope for every New Year. May we never forget that the Babe in Bethlehem now enthroned in Heaven is also living among us. He is Emmanuel, God with Us!

*Father Ric*