

CHRISTMAS 2023

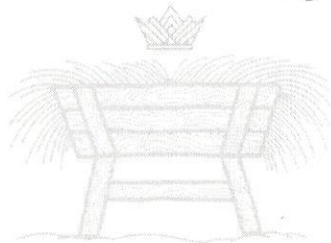
Dear Friends,

We will soon celebrate the great *Solemnity of The Nativity of the Lord – Christmas*. Already Christmas cards are in the mail, Christmas music fills the airwaves, and Christmas décor can be seen on, and in, our homes. Christmas gifts are being exchanged. Choirs are practicing Christmas music and parishioners are beginning to decorate the churches in preparation for the Christmas liturgies. Advertisements throughout the diocese encourage Catholics to **“Come Home For Christmas”!** We want to welcome sisters and brothers who worship with us at Christmas, so all will experience the profound blessing of being a follower of Jesus Christ – the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, as Handel’s *Messiah* so beautifully proclaims!



And when we give each other Christmas gifts in His name, let us remember that He has given us the sun and the moon and the stars, and the earth with its forests and mountains and oceans - and all that lives and move upon them. He has given us all green things and everything that blossoms and bears fruit and all that we quarrel about and all that we have misused - and to save us from our foolishness, from all our sins, He came down to earth and gave us Himself.

- Sigrid Undset



At this darkest time of the year, *“Jesus is born in our midst; He is God with us. He comes to accompany our daily lives, to share with us in all things: our joys and sorrows, our hopes and fears. He comes as a helpless child. He is born in the cold night, poor among the poor. In need of everything, he knocks at the door of our hearts to find warmth and shelter.”* (Pope Francis, Christmas Message 2022)

During these Christmas festivities, take time to recall your blessings and give thanks in quiet prayer. When caught up in the hustle and bustle of Christmas preparations, be attentive to recognize the abundant presence of grace and goodness that surrounds you. The Lord reveals himself still in boundless acts of kindness and generosity. When you are aware of his presence through others, allow him to move you deeply, and to be generous in turn. His mercy works in and through us. As we are blessed by the goodness of others, so others are blessed by our generous acts!

The 1928 Nobel Prize winning Norwegian author, Sigrid Undset, wrote this beautiful reflection on Christmas. I offer it as a gentle gift of wisdom.

Our Lady of the Annunciation, pray for us!

Ex corde, + Douglas, OMI