

Dear Parishioners,

The essence of the Christmas message is found in the third chapter of the Gospel of John, "God so loved the world that He gave us

His only begotten Son." Humble shepherds, an angel chorus and mysterious wise men bearing gifts are part of the appeal of the season.

Dreams warning the Magi to return by a different route, and dreams warning Joseph to take the child and flee to Egypt, give intrigue to the Christmas drama.

The manger scene, so familiar to us now, can mask the realities of the first Christmas. Mary and Joseph had no option but to set off on an arduous journey to Bethlehem, even though the child was due at any time. The soft lights and sweet smells of contemporary crib scenes can easily hide the hardship of the lonely stable where the Son of God was born.

The surprise of Christmas is that Jesus began his life among the poor, the homeless, the refugees, and the foreigners. The challenge of Christmas is beautifully captured by the noted author,

Howard Thurman:

"When the song of the angels is still,

When the star in the sky has gone,

When the kings and princes are home,

When shepherds are back with their sheep,

The work of Christmas begins:

To find the lost, to heal the broken,

To feed the hungry, to release the prisoner,

To build the nations, To make peace among the people,

To make music in the heart."

Both the reference of Pope Francis to the smell of the sheep and the smell of the stable in Bethlehem is to be found in the smell of hard times in dealing with the pandemic and now the Omicron variant.

Let the light of the Christmas Christ, roll back this long darkness and bring in the light of Hope and good health. May the blessing of Peace be yours this Christmas.

Sincerely yours in Christ,
Very Rev. Nicholas P. Clavin, V.F.