



## FROM THE DESK OF FR. MIKE

Merry Christmas.

At the Church of St. Mary the trees are still up, the Christ child is in the manger, the Magi have completed the characters in the crèche and we continue to pray our way through the joys of Christmas. Celebrating the feast of the Baptism of the Lord, this Monday, January 9, we conclude the festive, joyous, and hope filled season.

The joy, the gift, the hope, the truth of the Child of God, born in time, as Savior of the world speaks heartfelt truths for all ages. Whatever year we were born on this earth, may the promise of the Child of God, born in time over two thousand years ago, bring hope and promise to us as we complete our celebration of Emmanuel, "God with us!"

Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI died early in the morning of December 31. News of his death spread across the world. Eyes were drawn to the liturgies and rituals that were being celebrated in Vatican City this past week for the death of a Pope who shepherded the Church and then retired and stepped back from his role, to complete his life in prayer.

There are two quotes from Pope Benedict XVI that I invite your reflection on these final days of our celebration of Jesus' birth. The first quote is from a blessing given to the world by Pope Benedict on December 25, 2010 - "God is not distant: He is 'Emmanuel,' God-with-us. He is no stranger: He has a face, the face of Jesus." Pope Benedict was offering, in blessing, the truth that Christians around the world profess, Jesus is Emmanuel, God with us. It is up to each of us, as we grow in our faith maturity throughout the time we have on God's earth to manifest and act on that truth. Each person is able to express and serve as an example to each other in their lived relationship with Jesus.

The second quote is from the first encyclical written and published by Pope Benedict in January 2006, eight months after he became the 265 pontiff to lead the Roman Catholic Church. While writing on God's love for humanity he stated; "Being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction." Throughout our earthly lives we strive to use the gift of our free will, God given free will, to deepen our relationship with God's son. From baptism we are to identify ourselves with Jesus and follow the path that he has led to the glory and joy of everlasting life. May our encounter with Jesus in the coming year be shared and celebrated with our brothers and sisters in Christ.

May Pope Benedict rest in the peace of our Lord and Savior, with all the angels, for all eternity.

As a focus for the coming year, the Parish Staff and the Parish Council are going to be reflecting on how at the Church of St. Mary, as followers of Jesus, how in individual and in communal events we can **"Help bring people to Jesus this year."** We are able to bring people to Jesus in the Masses and prayers of the Church, we are able to bring people to Jesus in the way we live our lives. As we live our lives in the time and place God has us in history, may our faith and friendship in Jesus be the hope that is lived and shared, until we are called to the longed for promises of heaven.

We conclude the formal feasts and celebration of the birth of Emmanuel, God with us, celebrating the beginning of his ministry as he comes up out of the River Jordan, being baptized by John the Baptist. Jesus assured the disciples that he would always be with them, with the Church until the end of time. May the beauty and power of Christmas we have lived with each other guide us in humble service throughout 2023.

May God bless us with hearts filled with the presence of Jesus this Christmas season,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Fr. Mike Macius".