



Christmas 2016

Dear People of St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception Church, St. John the Evangelist Church and all who are celebrating with us,

Merry Christmas! There is no substitute to this greeting. Over two thousand years, there have been attempts to ignore and even outlaw this greeting and its message. To many others, this is just another day. For believers, this cannot be. Each year at the Vatican, our Holy Father, the Pope, offers this very greeting in numerous languages. Still, the message is the same; Christ Jesus is born!

Don't be bothered by the new generations of Scrooges and Grinches. Their sour attitudes did not keep Christmas from coming. Of course, Scrooge and the Grinch changed. There are many more who need to change. It may include you and me!

This is a special bulletin for the Masses of Christmas. Our weekend bulletin is prepared by Diocesan Publications of Byron Center, MI. Many patrons and friends advertise in the bulletin as a service to you, our parishioners. The bulletin provides helpful information about events at our parishes and throughout the Diocese. The daily Mass schedule is posted there. Since joining as a collaborative our bulletin features more pages and is in color. Many from both parishes have taken advantage of special events to foster greater community between St. Mary and St. John.

To our guests: You share a lot in common with our Blessed Virgin Mary and St. Joseph. They were traveling on the First Christmas. Their journey led them to the City of David, Bethlehem, their ancestral home. The name Bethlehem means house of bread. Your journey has brought you to the altar of God, where you will receive the Bread of Life. I pray for your safe journey and blessings upon the family members and friends whom you are visiting this Holy Day.

To our occasional parishioners: Christmas comes but once a year, but its meaning is celebrated each week. I appeal as your pastor, inviting you to make a resolution for the year of our Lord 2017 to return to a regular, weekly presence. You are most welcomed and your Church family misses you. Is something preventing your return? Call upon Fr. Craig, Fr. Joe, Deacon Ken or Deacon Mike and let us help. Let the joy of Christmas remove the barriers of sins from all hearts. Jesus is waiting for you.

To the faithful of St. Mary and St. John: You are an inspiration by your weekly presence at Sunday Mass. What is left for you? Only Jesus! He is here and you know it. I thank The Lord for letting me serve you as the pastor of our collaborative of St. Mary and St. John Parishes. Along with Fr. Joseph Gray, pastor emeritus, it is our joy to serve as priests of Jesus Christ. We are eager to serve and look forward to the blessing of the *Year of Grace 2017*. We pray that the New Year will bring a new growth in holiness and renew Christians to follow Jesus. This is possible through our united efforts to witness to others our belief and commitment to our Lord and Savior. The sights and sounds of Christmas set the stage. Be the eager participants in the Lord's mission. Once again, in sincerity of heart, I wish you Merry Christmas!

In His Love,



Father Craig Lusk, Pastor