

The message of Christmas is ever ancient and ever new: Jesus Christ, our Savior, is born.

Each Christmas brings a time of renewal for the world, as God desires to be with us in the flesh. This Christmas, in a special way, I pray for a renewal in our Church, which begins when we allow Jesus to come to us, just as he came into the world that first Christmas.

You see, we are a people in need of salvation, forgiveness, and grace. So, once again, Jesus comes to us as our savior, the one who forgives us, and the one who gives us new life.

Perhaps that is why it is so natural for us who believe to come together as families to worship our newborn King at Christmastime. We want to show our children what we have found — the Messiah, the one God promised to send to us. Our Redeemer. Our Lord.

It is my hope that our hearts will be opened wide enough to receive the love that God has poured into us through Mary's child. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish, but might have eternal life" (John 3:16).

No doubt, this has been a tough year for us in the Church. We are a humbled Church. But, God is constantly reminding us that he still loves us, not because we are good, but because he is good. And God has a way of showing us that although we are not perfect — he is.

As we contemplate the God who comes to us in the flesh, as we pray before the crib of Jesus, let's admit that we still need him. We need the Savior who came to take away the sins of the world, and our sins, too. When we lose our way, which we do so often, we need him to put us back on the right path.

God comes to our rescue. God sends us his son, Jesus, who shows us the way to salvation.

This Way of Jesus includes defending the vulnerable, teaching the goodness of God, sacrificing for others, taking care of the poorest among us, and worshipping God in Spirit and in truth. Having prayed about it, I am more convinced than ever that the different Way of Jesus also includes asking forgiveness for the sins of our Church's past, taking care of the victims of the abuse that was recently detailed in the Grand Jury Report, and determining to build a better Church with Jesus as our shepherd. And, yes, it will take all of us working together with Jesus who must be in the center of our lives and at the center of our Church.

In the listening sessions I held this fall, I heard our faithful people tell me that they were ready to help in the process of renewal. They are ready to be a part of a Church that wants to renew itself with the help of Jesus.

This path to new life begins when we say: "May Christ be born again in me once more."

Thank you for your goodness, for your care and your concern. Thank you for your prayers and the love you showed to me during my recent illness. More than that, however, thank you for the love you show the Church that Christ died to bring to birth. Thank you for wanting to be a part of the ongoing and constant renewal and reform of the Church that Christ loves so much.

May God bless our Church and our Diocese. May God bless each of our parishes and all of our ministries. May God bless our poor and everyone in need. May God bless all those whom we have harmed by our own human weakness and sinfulness.

And finally, may God bless our families and each of our loved ones.

For unto us Jesus is born, our Emmanuel, a name that means, "God is with us."

Merry Christmas, everyone! God is with us!

Your brother in Christ,

The Most Rev.

Edward C. Malesic, JCL

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