

FROM THE PASTOR

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

This is the moment. Right here. Right now.

This is the moment that I know has the power to change a person's life for the better.

We gather together at Christmas Mass. You might have many reasons that you are here today:

- Some of you are at Mass because your family wants you to be here, and you thought that going to Church once or twice a year to make them happy is worth it. I get that, and **I'm really glad you're here.**
- Some of you are here because it's part of the Christmas tradition for you, and **I'm really glad you're here.**
- Some of you try to make it to Mass most Sundays, and the thought of not being here never entered your mind, and **I'm really glad you're here.**
- There may be a few of you who are here at Mass praying and hoping that the homily will not be too long. **I'm really glad you're here.** (And I'll do my best.)
- Some of you are sitting in one of our pews wondering what you're going to get for Christmas, or if the gift you bought someone else is going to bring joy to that person. You may also be wondering whether you bought too much or too little. I get and understand that too. **I'm really glad you're here.**
- Some of you are wondering how you're going to get the turkey or ham and all the other dishes ready by the time that the relatives arrive. **I'm really glad you're here.**
- Some of you are also wondering if you're going to be able to tolerate in-laws or get through Christmas without getting into an argument with a family member. I really do understand that from personal experience, all too well. **I'm really glad you're here.**

No matter how many of the above situations apply to you, I want to say, at this very moment, as you gather to celebrate Christmas Mass at Epiphany of Our Lord or St. James the Greater – Merry Christmas.

We are celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ, a very real person who was more than just a man. He was and is the Son of God. Yes, He was born in a manger. And yes, He was a baby. But when we fast forward in His life to what He did for us, that is what makes this day so important. And it's all true.

Jesus taught the world things that were radical in the time in which He lived. Many of His teachings are still radical today when you think about it, like:

- Loving your enemies
- making yourself a servant to others
- Giving your life for your friends, being humble, and above all
- Loving God with all your heart and soul.

People were astounded by what He said, because it was so countercultural. Many people, especially the authorities, hated what He said, precisely because it was countercultural.

Jesus did not preach a powerful message of change: He lived it.

He cured people. People who were possessed by demons, freed from their spiritual captivity. Jesus rocked the world by doing these things, and, as you can imagine, people flocked to him because of it. And the authorities felt threatened. And then, of course, Jesus was killed for this. Crucified. Brutally. This newborn baby who we celebrate today, the son of this saintly woman and this saintly man, eventually would be beaten, spat upon, nailed to cross, ridiculed and stabbed with a spear. It's all as real and gory and hard to imagine as it seems.

But then the moment happened. He really did rise from the dead. The tomb was empty. The authorities couldn't find Him. His friends and his mother saw Him. He spoke with them, taught them, prepared them for what was to come. And those people went out and told the world what happened. And that is why we are here, today.

We want to accompany you on your faith and together help each other deepen our relationship with Christ and to make our world a better place.



At this moment, we are here because this child was born into the world, grew into a man who lived a life of radical transformation, and that man died, willingly, so that we would never have to fear life or death!

On behalf of the dedicated parishioners of Epiphany of Our Lord and St. James the Greater parishes, I invite you to travel with us as we seek the Lord and proclaim his Gospel. Please let us know how we can help you take the next step in your faith journey by going to our parish website and clicking on the “Merry Christmas” banner or by visiting with myself, or one of our ambassadors at the end of Mass.

Merry Christmas,

Fr. Thomas M. Pastorius,
Pastor