

Christmas 2018

Good evening and welcome to Sacred Heart Church.

On behalf of our entire parish community

I welcome each of you

to this celebration of Christmas:

male and female, young and old, rich and poor,
gay and straight, married, divorced, widowed and single,
cradle Catholic, new Catholic, non-Catholic,
parishioner and visitor.

We echo Pope Francis who calls each of us
to reflect sincere warmth and compassion
for one another and for all people.

In this we welcome those among you
who have not felt welcome in the Catholic Church.
On behalf of the Church we apologize for that.

And so I speak for our entire parish community
when I say: I hope all feel welcome
and at peace in this holy place.

As we gather this evening/this morning
to celebrate again the birth of Jesus
we invite all to reflect more consciously
upon the experience of Jesus present in our lives
and to reflect on the ways our faith finds a home,
a place of nurturing, in the community of the Catholic Church.

You may come with a peaceful heart
or with a heart burdened by concerns
about your children, your elderly parents,
your job, your marriage, or your future.

You may be young and full of enthusiasm
about your faith and your life, or
you may be unsure about who God is
and where life is leading you.

You may be older and quietly reflective about what your life has been.
You may be at peace and full of gratitude
or you may have regrets as you approach
the final chapters of your life.

You may be with those you love most in life or you may be alone.
You may be pained by a broken marriage, or a fractured relationship
with a parent, sibling, a child, or a lost friendship.

You may be battling with unemployment, financial difficulties, substance abuse, illness or stress.

You may have discovered the presence of God here in our midst which has added a fullness to your life.

Or you may feel uncomfortable with your faith relationship with God or the church because of decisions you have made, or some sadness or tragedy in your life, or life circumstances that are beyond your control.

You may feel paralyzed in your faith because of your need to accept God's forgiveness, or the need to forgive someone else, or even to forgive yourself.

You may have recently returned to the practice of your faith or you may feel that you have unintentionally allowed the busyness or complexity of life to gradually draw you away from an active relationship with God or the Church.

Wherever you may be on your journey of faith
we believe that we are all one
in the God who has loved us into being
and who walks with each of us
throughout all the times and seasons of our lives,

and who, for reasons largely unknown to us,
has drawn us together here to celebrate
this holy night/day in prayer and in worship

We hope that being here as part of the Body of Christ,
celebrating the birth of Jesus
will be a source of healing, hope and peace for you.

As much as our weekly worship suffers from the absence of any one
who belongs to Christ,
our celebration tonight/today is richer because you are here.

(MUSIC)

And so once again we say: Welcome!

We pray that our celebration may enhance
the various other ways you are celebrating Christmas this year.

May our being together here in this holy place
to celebrate and to pray
enrich each of our lives and our faith,
drawing all of us to more faithfully be
the face of the living Jesus in our world today.

And now as one family of faith,
belonging to Jesus Christ,
let us stand and prayerfully sing together # 96
O come All Ye Faithful, found in the hymnal.

(This Call to Worship is based on the writings of Bill Huebsch and adapted by Fr. Joe and Sr. Pat)