



MERRY CHRISTMAS AND
HAPPY NEW YEAR 2023.



Dear Parishioners,

This Christmas, we will once again celebrate and appreciate God's greatest gift to us —the birth of Jesus Christ. In this context, allow me to share a Christmas Eve story that reminds us of the real reason why the Word became flesh and why Christmas is such a wonderful time of the year. The story is about a conversation between St Jerome and the Infant Jesus.

According to the ancient account, after many years spent in Jerusalem translating the Word of God, St. Jerome finished his grand project just days before Christmas. Then He decided to spend Christmas Eve praying in a grotto in nearby Bethlehem so he could be next to the site of the Nativity of Our Lord. It was around midnight. Jerome was praying, "Oh, Lord Jesus, how you tremble! How hard is your bed for the sake of my salvation! How shall I ever repay this?" Then, the Infant Jesus appeared to him saying, "Jerome, what will you give me for my birthday?"

Enthusiastically, Jerome declared, "Dear little Jesus, I must give you something. I give you my translation of your Word. Let me give you all my wealth." But, Baby Jesus simply replied, "No, Jerome that is not what I want. From the beginning the Heavens and the Earth are mine. I do not need your treasures. Give them to the poor. I shall receive that as if you had done it to me."

Jerome was speechless. Then began to plead earnestly, "Dear little Jesus, this I shall do gladly, but I must also give something just for you, or I shall die of sorrow. Then you tell me, Lord. Tell me what would give you the most joy on your birthday, and you shall have it."

The Child replies, "Dear Jerome, since you are so generous of heart, I will tell you what you may give to me. **Give me your sins—your bad conscience—and your condemnation!**"

Jerome asks, "What will you do with them?" And the Infant Jesus says, "I want to take them upon my shoulders. This shall be my glory, and my glorious deed, as Isaiah once said, that I shall take your sins upon myself and carry them away."

Weeping bitterly, Jerome says, "Oh, Child dear, Holy Child, how deeply you have touched my heart! I thought you wanted something good —but you want everything in me which is bad! Oh, take what is mine! Give me what is Yours! Then I shall be free from sin and assured of eternal life!"

Consequently, let this be our question this Christmas: what shall I give to Jesus? It is not so much a question of giving more. It is a question of giving more of ourselves. It is a challenge for all of us to become more involved. Moreover, that is what God did when he entered our world at the first Christmas. Let the joy of the season penetrate our hearts and souls, so we may change our lives to become peacemakers, love others as we love ourselves, and love God above all things.

I would like to thank you for all your love, support, and financial contribution to the growth of our parish. I am grateful to all the members of our community; the volunteers and all the different ministries that keep our parish going.

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope. Romans 15:13. I wish you, dear parishioners, a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year 2023.

Rev. Fr. L. John Charles, Pastor
The Parish of Saint Malachy