

**FROM THE PASTOR**  
**JANUARY 15, 2023**  
**THE SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME**  
**THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY**

Our parish has just completed the celebration of the wondrous Christmas mystery. Throughout the grace-filled season of Advent, we sat in darkness and the shadow of death awaiting the true light which no darkness will ever extinguish. Each week the light of the Advent wreath grew greater until finally our beloved Christmas arrived. Christmas was very simple and humble at St. Paul. There were not banks of poinsettias obscuring the sacred altar, ambo, font, or tabernacle. Rather the flowers were used as an enhancement to the beauty of what is there. Bishop Andrzej celebrated the 10.30 Mass on Christmas, and remarked how he loves to come to St. Paul because he knows that here all things are done as the Church asks us to do them, in a noble simplicity.

And now Christmas has come to its end, and I must thank so very many. Before covid, it had been the custom to have choir and orchestra at the Masses on Christmas Eve. That has changed now. But through the extreme generosity of a parishioner who wishes to remain anonymous we did have strings, brass, timpani at every Mass in addition to organ and cantor. Although not full orchestra, it was a very uplifting experience. I am most grateful to the ladies of our Altar Guild who did such an exquisite job in making our church, “none other than the House of God and the Gate of Heaven.” With our new configuration of the narthex the natural daylight fills the Church. Our Altar Guild president is Mrs. Ursula Coughlin, and she is ably assisted by Ronnie Borelli, Mary D’Aquila, Jesmel John, and Janine Margiotta. I am most grateful to our Knights of Columbus and Squires who did so much for the Tree Lighting and Decoration. I am grateful for our ushers and to Gary and Eva and all our guest musicians. Our dear Marian Guild under Grace Monteleone have always shown such dedication, but greater than at no other time than Christmas. They are at the heart of St. Paul’s. God bless our Lectors. Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, and Altar Servers. God bless our parish staff: Deb, Louise and her Religious Ed volunteers, Lynn, Chris, and William.

Sincere gratitude to our own dear Deacon Raymond D’Alessio. Deacon Ray came to our parish on February 1, 2017, almost six years ago. He has endeared himself to all our parishioners: the boys and girls of Religious Ed, the young couples planning to enter Holy Matrimony, which Scripture calls, “an honorable estate,” our elderly to whom he ministers so lovingly, and to all our parishioners. Deacon Ray worked tirelessly to make our Christmas the best we have ever had, all the while seeking no other reward but the joy of giving of himself to bring others closer to God. May God bless Deacon Ray and give him many more years in health and happiness.

And finally, to you, our dear parishioners, may I offer sincere gratitude for all you have done for St. Paul’s and for me at Christmas and, indeed, for the last ten years of my being among you. Your generosity in the Christmas collection is phenomenal, and I cannot thank you enough for all your gifts to me. So many of the children gave me gift certificates from their own allowances. And all

to my favorite places: Carvel, Dunkin Donuts, Café Dolce Vita. (I keep all this secret from my cardiologist. and from the physicians who take such good care of me at the Berrie Diabetic Clinic at Columbia- NY Presbyterian).

Lastly, may I offer sincere apologies to those whom I have harmed in the planning of our Christmas schedule and celebrations this year or any year. Once, I received a letter from an individual who was quite angry about our changing the Midnight Mass to 10.00PM and told me that this change had ruined the family Christmas. I was so sorry to read that because I had never wished to ruin anyone's Christmas. If I have done so, I can assure you that it was unintentional, and I am most sincerely sorry. I have been simply trying to accommodate the parish schedule to the reality of St. Paul's being a one priest parish. At another time, I received a telephone message from a parishioner who was very upset that the outdoor Nativity has been placed closer to the Church, and not facing Cedar Swamp Road. I had decided to do that so that our own parishioners could be uplifted by the sight of the Holy Infant. And that as a parish family we could celebrate the lighting of the Tree and Nativity. As cars speed past our Church very few can see the Holy Infant. Besides, several years ago the Holy Infant was stolen from the manger. Two of our devoted parishioners, Jesse and Cathy Cromer, replaced the Infant at great personal expense to themselves. I would like the new Infant that the Cromer's gave us to be with us for many years, and not stolen. To that individual who was so upset by this, my sincere apologies. And to the individual who stole the Holy Infant, may His wondrous appearance bring you conversion and peace.

As we close the door on another Christmas, it is my sincere prayer that God, in His great and abundant mercy, will allow all of you to see our next Christmas here at St. Paul. And that to those who will be called home to God before then, that he will allow us all to see the face of the Holy Infant in eternity.

In Jesus and Mary,  
*Monsignor James F. Pereda*