

From the Pastor
January 5, 2020
The Epiphany of the Lord

May I express sincere best wishes to all of you for a Blessed and Merry Christmas. Although the stores are filled with After Christmas signs, we who are believers, know that Christmas is so great a mystery that it is not celebrated in merely one day, but it continues until the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord which is next Sunday. May I also express sincere gratitude to all of you for your great generosity to both me and to St. Paul's parish. It is precisely your sacrifices and selflessness which enables St. Paul's to continue to shine forth as a Light on our little Hill and bear witness to the Light of the World, Our Lord Jesus Christ. May God bless and reward each and every one of you. We are most grateful for all who worked so diligently and with such great care to make the Church look so beautiful. There were parishioners of all ages working on the decorating of the Church: children, teenagers, twenty-something's and adults. We are so grateful to our parish organist and cantors as well as our guest musicians in the orchestra. The music was so uplifting at Christmas and many remarked it was like being at St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. I am so grateful for the presence of orchestral music at St. Paul's at Christmas. The 4.00PM and 6.00PM Mass had full orchestra, singers, cantor and organ. The 10.00PM Mass had brass, timpani, organ, choir and cantor. That was also the case for the 11.00AM on Christmas Day. The 9.00AM Mass on Christmas Day had cantor and organ. It was a glorious Christmas and all this music was provided by a very generous parishioner who wishes to remain anonymous.

I am so grateful to our Altar Guild who worked to make the Church look so beautiful and I am grateful to our ushers, altar servers, lectors and extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion.

Two years ago, an anonymous donor gave a beautiful Nativity set. The figurines are of fine porcelain and they are hand painted. Each piece is a work of art. My favorite was the camels which had such a charming expression. Although this is the third year that this Nativity scene has been displayed, many never noticed it before. This year it was in the Fatima Chapel for all to see and admire.

Today we keep the Solemnity of the Epiphany. Although God had become a man on Christmas Day, the mystery was known by very few. It was as though the sun were just rising in the east with its glorious rays shining forth. But on the Feast of the Epiphany, we may say that the sun is shining forth in its noonday zenith and spreading its light throughout the whole world. That is why the Epiphany is the Feast of Light as our six candles on the altar so beautifully attest.

The word Epiphany means Manifestation. On this glorious Feast, the great mystery is made known to all the nations and peoples of the World. For on this day, the three Kings arrived bearing their wondrous gifts for the Holy Infant. In the person of the three Kings all the nations of the earth streamed to the manger. On Christmas we sang in the Liturgy, *Christus natus est nobis, venite adoremus!* Christ is born for us, come let us adore Him. But today, the Epiphany, we sing, *Christus apparuit nobis, venite adoremus!* Christ has appeared for us, come let us adore Him!

Actually on the Feast of the Epiphany three mysteries are celebrated: The three Kings come to

the manger, Our Lord manifests His glory at the Jordan River, and He reveals His glory in the First Miracle of Cana by changing water into wine. The famous author James Joyce bases his charming short story *The Dead* from the *Dubliners* on these three manifestations.

Therefore, the Epiphany fills us with joy. Many of our dear little ones may be interested to know that in Italy, Spain, and the entire Ibero-Hispanic world it is the Three Kings who bring the good children their gifts. Just as American children may leave a snack for Santa and the reindeer, so in those lands the children leave the gift of hay for the camels of the Three Kings.

New lamps: The installation of the new lights in our Church has been completed. These lights were well worth waiting for. They are not out of a catalogue. Each one was designed for St. Paul's and there are none like them in the entire world. They are made of alabaster and they will illuminate the Church beautifully. There will be a savings of 75% of our energy output. There are no bulbs in them. There are lumens which will last 25 years. May I ask someone to volunteer to hold the ladder for me in 2045 so that I may change them.

But most of all they are beautiful. Please look at them and see that all the Church is in a lovely order and harmony that reflects the Sacred. The new lamps have the same motif of all the railings, with the lovely brass. May I encourage everyone to look at the Church and see the Beauty of holiness. If one merely rushes in and out, one will see nothing. Pray in the chapels and invoke our Heavenly friends, the saints. Everything has a purpose and meaning. Pride is always a sin. But we may be very pleased that many priests and bishops, as well as the faithful, have come to St. Paul's to see the Beauty of Holiness. May I thank those who have contributed to the Capital Campaign, and may I invite those who have not done so, to consider prayerfully the opportunity to do something great for God. For the Church will outlive us all.

Today is also the Liturgical Commemoration of St. John Neumann, the bishop and Wonder Worker of Philadelphia. He is such a wondrous saint that I will devote next week's column to him as the saint of the month. We must not confuse him with St. John Henry, Cardinal Newman who was canonized in October and never was in the United States, let alone the Bishop of Philadelphia.

In Jesus and Mary,
Monsignor James F. Pereda