

WELCOME.....AND THANKS

We gather on this Christmas Day to *welcome* the Word made Flesh—the Son of God, Prince of Peace, Light of the World—Jesus, our savior and brother. We know from the gospels of Matthew and Luke that he wasn't welcomed at his birth but turned away at the door of an inn which could find no more room for weary travelers. It was only the shepherds, the lowest of the low, the cowboys of their day, who came to *welcome* him to our earth.

Now, over two millennia later, it's all the more urgent that we *welcome* the Lord into our hearts—and little by little, into our world again—by being people who *welcome* those seeking shelter and refuge, warmth and safety, love and understanding. We *welcome* Jesus by the way we open our hearts to those who speak a different language or practice a different faith. We *welcome* Jesus by our willingness to forgive. We *welcome* Jesus by our determination to practice our faith in the community of the Church each Sabbath day so that we can truly live our faith the rest of the week. And today, we *welcome* him in all of you who come to celebrate these days of Christmastime at St. Joseph.

We also give *thanks* for all who are here week in and week out, and we hope that those who join us only from time to time will return often in 2017 to experience and celebrate the Lord's saving presence in this community of faith. We give *thanks* for all who are so generous with their time and talent, especially our liturgical ministers and those who work so hard to prepare the environment of our worship space for our celebration of all the days of Christmas. And we give *thanks* for those who share their earthly treasure so that the Parish of St. Joseph can continue to be a place of *welcome* in our community. Farther on in today's bulletin you'll see the Annual Financial Report for the fiscal year that concluded this past June which demonstrates the generosity of so many but which also highlights the need for a continuing generous response from *all* who have chosen to call St. Joseph their church home.

And last, but certainly not least, we give *thanks* to our Creator for revealing the abundance of divine love in Jesus. May the God who chose to be revealed in a humble home in Bethlehem find a *welcome* home in our hearts and within our parish community during these Christmas days and throughout the coming year.

Fr. Bob