



Christmas 2020

In many of our churches, usually at the beginning of the evening Mass, a cantor or soloist will sing the hymn “O Holy Night”. It is a traditional hymn and carries with it, not only the story of the birth of Jesus, but also much sentiment and emotion because of its musical setting. In some places it sets the stage for the celebration of one of the most important Masses we celebrate, reminding us of the Birth of Jesus into our world.

There is no question that our Christmas celebrations this year will be a bit different. With all the masking, sanitizing, crowd control and distancing, we are keenly aware of our need to be safe and to keep others safe during this pandemic. We know however, that it is important that we not let this important feast go by without some celebration on our part. We missed our Easter celebrations when everything was locked down, we want to at least celebrate one great feast of faith in 2020.

I want to commend the willingness of our parishes and their parish priests and teams for the many steps they have taken to make our church facilities safe for all parishioners. It has not been easy, and yet everyone responded and continues to respond to follow the protocols necessary for a safe celebration of Mass. This effort is important, and demonstrates that as a church community we know the need to be safe and to keep others safe during this uncertain time of the pandemic.

As we celebrate the birthday of Jesus this year, we remember that when He was born, it was also an uncertain time for the people of Israel. There was an inconvenient census called by the emperor, there was political and social upheaval and much poverty, there was foreign rule over the people of Jesus’ time, and there was even difficulty in finding a safe place for Mary to give birth. So we can appreciate the kind of situation in which Joseph and Mary found themselves at the time of the birth of the Lord.

As we celebrate the Nativity, we will call one another, we will send messages of greetings and hope, we will go to Mass, if we can, or attend Mass through social media, and we will share in the mystery of this celebration knowing that Christ came into our world to be with us, to teach us how to love and care for one another, and to assure us of God’s love and concern for us. May this message of hope and peace touch our hearts at Christmas, and whether we are together or separated, at home and away from home, we know that the spirit of Christmas somehow truly unites us in God’s love. May this bring us some comfort and peace.

A Merry and Holy Christmas to all!

Bishop Fred J. Colli