

Solemnity of Christmas– December 24-25, 2015

Readings: Christmas Eve–Isaiah 62:1-5; Acts 13:16-17, 22-25; Matt 1:18-25

Christmas Day: Isaiah 52:7-10; Titus 3:4-7; Luke 2:15-20

Quietly and without fanfare this past Monday, the shortest day of the year came and went, all 8 hours, 45 minutes and 59 seconds of it, and the triumph of darkness faded once more into the past. As the light of a new day has now ever so slowly risen over this majestic space, we are ushered ever so gently into the season of light.

This solemnity is a study of contrasts– contrasts between what is and what ought to be, between all that for which we long and what we already have. We usher in the season of light, the darkness having been conquered, not by the passing of the solstice, but by the birth of our Savior.

On a day like this, my cares seem utterly trivial in the overall scheme of things, even if they seem important. How will people like the decorations? Is everything ready, will people be discouraged in trying to find parking spot, will they approve of the music we selected, just to name a few. Though my traditional desire for a White Christmas was not really met, in the darkness and cold of a Minnesota December, our faith teaches us that the light of Christ overcomes the darkness.

Amidst the cacophony of sounds, ‘holiday music’ and antiseptic greetings meant to offend no one, the Prince of Peace is born in our midst, sent to make possible our salvation. In a world that desires peace, Jesus brings it in his own person; through his own kindness he saved us. Scripture teaches that we were not saved on our own account, by our own deeds, but in and through mercy. What will we do with this gift? How will we utilize it? Here’s my list for 2015.

I pray that the spirit of Christ will pervade each and every family— not merely a spirit of fellowship and good will, but the Spirit of self-sacrificial love, poured out for the other, and not for ourselves, just as he has taught.

I pray that civility will enter into our public debates as a nation, an increasingly diverse and fragmented nation. May our leaders and those who hope to be our leaders, put forth their ideas with a candor balanced by prudence, honest ideas, and not ones merely poll tested for the greatest advantage. Rather, may they look to what is true, just and good in and of itself and may cynicism never prevail amidst a divided nation.

I pray that the example of St. Joseph as a guardian of the Redeemer and husband to Mary will inspire the young fathers and not as young in our midst, to see their role as truly a spiritual one in the family. May they never be content with “leaving religion to the schools” on account of being too busy.

I pray that our nation will be safe from all who would seek to harm us. May we never be naïve about the threats that surely exist, nor give into despair that we can do nothing to address them. In rightfully seeking justice, I pray that we will never fall prey to indiscriminate vengeance, itself unbecoming of a follower of Christ.

I pray that priests will faithfully and courageously live out their vocations, promises made on their ordination day, perhaps right here in this Cathedral. May they live simply and radiate the joy of the Gospel, seeking to be instruments of God’s infinite mercy during this Year of Mercy. May they never give into discouragement, even in these most challenging times in our local Church.

I pray that mothers (and grandmothers!) will realize that their vocation, too often maligned by a few, is in fact the most beautiful

of vocations. And may the rest of us appreciate its many challenges. Mary stands ready to serve as a model- animated by a spirit of strength in the midst of trial, obedience to God's loving will, and a pervasive spirit of joy and hope that reaches out to all.

Mary began by treasuring what she heard in her heart. She began in silence, wonder and awe. So too must we begin in awe and reverence before we begin in joviality. I am still awed every time I look into a manger scene, gazing upon its loveliness. It never gets old; please God, may it always be so.

Christ is the reason for our happiness. We exchange gifts, a wonderful custom, because we have all received the greatest gift in the person of Christ. We desire to show others of our love for them through a thoughtful gift; the older we get, the more we desire to see others receive than to receive ourselves. My brief Christmas list

The greatest gift we can give is that of peace and charity in our families. Love begins at home, taught Blessed mother Teresa, soon-to-be St. Mother Teresa. We will never love those we see only once if we do not first love those whom we see everyday. We have all the more reason to love our brothers, sisters, parents, sons and daughters. May we draw closer to our Cathedral parish community, united in faith and charity.

Our charity, our joy and our happiness begin in silent adoration. From this adoration we draw the strength to go out into the world as people who live and promote peace. We do this without ever losing a sense of wonder and awe, never allowing sadness to cast a pall over our joy. I close with these words from St. John Paul II: "In the luminous silence of your Nativity, you, Emmanuel, continue to speak to us. And we are ready to listen to you. Amen!"