

CHRISTMAS 2020

Again, a very Merry and Blessed Christmas to you all!

And a special welcome to those of you who have come home for the holidays, and to those who are watching our liturgy via the livestream.

I am so happy that we can be together on this most holy night/day.

I want to share a story about a young boy named Patrick who recently had to go to Franciscan hospital in Crown Point for blood work.

Now that can be a traumatic event for any child (even some of us adults), but Patrick has Down's syndrome so we can hardly imagine how he felt.

As his family was returning to their car, they passed by the large crucifix outside of the hospital.

Patrick said "Oh Dad, can we please stop? I need to see Jesus." And so, of course, they stopped.

Then Patrick asked, "Can we sing him 'Happy Birthday'? You know his birthday is coming up soon."

And so the family stood in front of the crucifix and sang "Happy Birthday" with a little child to lead them.

Given all that we have been through, we need the wisdom of a child to recognize that the baby whose birth we celebrate this night/day grew to be the man who would hang upon a cross.

But, of course, that's not the end of the story.

Jesus died and was buried, but rose victorious from the grave and lives forever.

At 4:00 and 10:00 pm -

And as St. Paul declares, "we await the blessed hope, the appearance of the glory of our great God and savior, Jesus Christ."

At 10:00 am -

He is the one through God created the universe and "who sustains all things in being."

And so, as the angels said to the shepherds, Jesus says to us today, "Do not be afraid."

We have been through a lot during the past 9 months.

When you think about it, 9 months ago on March 25th, on the feast of the Annunciation, the Church's liturgy commemorated the beginning of the Incarnation in the womb of Mary, and now here we are celebrating his birth.

So many sacrifices have been made, hardships endured, and sorrows borne during this time.

Just as there is pain in giving birth, we have suffered through the pain of the pandemic.

It isn't over, but there is hope on the horizon.

Jesus was born in order to bring us the hope of lasting victory over sin and death.

The birth we celebrate leads to the cross we venerate and the resurrection we profess and proclaim.

The birth of Jesus as Son of Mary led to our rebirth as the children of God.

As we visit the wooden stable that holds the newborn babe, let us stand with each other at the foot of the wood of the cross and sing "Happy Birthday" to our Lord and Redeemer.