

Dear Parishioners,

At Christmas we light a candle to show the way. It is an ancient Irish custom, a sign of a Christmas home, a safe house for the priest in troubled times. A sign of hope in sorrow, in bereavement, in separation, in loneliness. A sign of welcome to the stranger, to the immigrant; welcome home from hospital; welcome to the peacemaker and even if some thru death or distance won't be home for Christmas – a penny candle will be lit to renew a flame of love.

Barbara Streisand's dramatic act of lighting a candle all those years ago, at the beginning of her last concert, still remains with me as significant. She dedicated it to the many wise and good people whose lives had been needlessly and violently cut short; leader figures, lights in darkness. It was an inspirational gesture, a kind of gentle rage against the dying of the light. But more than that, it was a kindling of hope, a birth of new light and a looking to the source of light.

Christmas is the celebration of the birth of light. We were afraid of the dark, but it need not be so any longer for Christ's coming has shattered all kinds of darkness. That's what Christmas celebrates. So if we rage against the dying of the Light, we do so with a confidence that ours is an everlasting light.

Lighting the Christmas candle is no stage act. Christ has come to stay, so dot the hills and valleys with the flickering flame of hope. For now He shines through the vulnerable flesh of a helpless child in a manger in Bethlehem. This Christmas this child is born afresh, a light in the darkness of our times. Once again Jesus is born into the messiness of our world. The good news is that Christ comes to illuminate that darkness. Christ is the torch. He is the love, a shining light, to light our way.

We too are called to be beams of light. This past year, you the people of God have been a light in the midst of the darkness of the clergy abuse which descended upon the Church, by your fidelity to prayerful practice of your faith. Your response to our offertory increase "ask" last fall was quite remarkable (magnificent). God Bless you for continuing to give in these challenging times.

Parents and grandparents at the school make big sacrifices for Catholic education. Modern scientific study tells us the greatest environment for the formation of your children is not 6th thru 12th grade but Pre-K thru 8th grade. You are giving your children the greatest opportunity. Our new preschool, we are happy to say, has an enrollment of 46 students – a light in our time. I commend the parents and grandparents of our faith formation students, who faithfully bring their children to classes and Mass each Sunday. There is no substitute for parents modeling the reception of the sacraments for their children.

I wish to remind you that the greatest place to make preparation for Christmas is the human heart, God so loved the world. Do make space in your calendar to bring the whole family for the Advent Penance Service on Monday, December 17, 2018 at 7:00pm. Reconciliation with God and each other frees us to give the very best in love because we shed selfishness and prepare the way for the birth of Jesus in our hearts.

We invite you and your family to join us in the Christmas liturgies. May the Christ of Christmas bless you and your family with joy & love.

Merry Christmas,

Rev. Nicholas Clavin

Rev. Nicholas P. Clavin
Pastor