

St. Edward, St. George, St. Paul & St. Peter Parishes
Seattle, Washington

December 24, 2017

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

For the four weeks of Advent, our hopeful voices sang, "O Come, O Come Emmanuel", and at last at the glorious birth of Jesus, our Lord and Savior, we joyfully proclaim, "Emmanuel, God is with us!". With His birth, the Light of Love is with us. It's time for us to see this Light and feel its warmth in our lives.

Christmastide is the time of the year when we are especially challenged to live in the spirit of peace and good will to all. It's a time for renewal of spirit and inner refreshment and for making a new start. Another year has passed with many events, public and private, touching our lives in different ways. No doubt this year has brought joys and sadness in different measure to each of us, all coloring our memories of 2017.

In each of our parishes, I hope you are beginning to experience the benefits of a consistent pastoral presence. We now have one priest assigned to each parish – Fr. Patrick at St. Paul, Fr. Armando at St. George, Fr. Alex at St. Peter, and myself at St. Edward. These changes and assignments are still a work in progress, so please bear with us. As you know, our cluster of four parishes presents us with a variety of unique challenges. As your Pastor, I understand the importance of my presence in each of our parishes and schools, so I do my best to be available to all. We also have to deal with the need for Fr. Armando to divide his time between St. Mary's and our parishes. We, your priests, need your ongoing and continuing prayers.

Traditionally, we see Christmas as a time of peace and joy, a time to celebrate with family, friends and loved ones. This joy was evidenced by the Advent/Christmas programs presents by each of our three wonderful parish schools. The children, from pre-school to middle school, showcased their talents in their songs, dances, playing musical instruments, etc. We all hope and pray that your Christmas will encounter the blessings of that peace, joy, and celebration. For some of us, such joyful celebrations may not be possible. You may have lost a loved one since last Christmas, or you may be overburdened by money worries, family problems, and sickness, or the variety of other issues that plague us. If you are suffering at this time, we want to assure you that, we, your parish community, care deeply about you and offer you our love and support.

In his first Christmas message, our Holy Father, Pope Francis, reminded all Catholics "*not to place ourselves above others, but rather lower ourselves, place ourselves at the service of the poor, make ourselves small and poor with them and to be rays of light for hope, especially for the poor of the world*". In our own parishes and schools, I encourage all communities, ministries, and staff to take heed and follow this advice

sincerely, placing ourselves at the service of all. Let us “share the journey” with the poor, refugees, immigrants, the homeless, and the many underprivileged in our midst. As St. Mother Teresa has aptly & wisely advised us, it is not how much work or great work we have done, but it is how much love we put into doing our work.

As we will celebrate Christmas Masses in our respective parishes, each one of you can be sure and certain that you are all remembered at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. The readings for all the various liturgies proclaim the same mystery. God not only authors life and pours out grace in the midst of it, He chooses to join us in our lives by becoming one of us. Jesus enters into life that we might do the same. Whatever the circumstance of your life now – grief or joy, struggle or success, faith or doubt – Jesus has lived it himself, and He longs to live it with you. Choose life with Jesus! Let Him be born again in your heart! Allow Him to enter into your moments and give you the life for which you were created.

As the year 2017 winds down and 2018 approaches, I want to say a heartfelt and sincere THANK YOU to my brother priests, staff, and faculty of our parishes and schools, parish leaders and groups/communities/ministries, and most of all, to all parishioners for your love and commitment. You generous stewardship of your time, talent, and resources continues to bear fruit for the Kingdom of God. I would also like to extend my gratitude to all who worked so hard to make our Christmas celebrations truly wonderful. Thanks to all who were involved in decorating our churches and setting up for the different liturgies, not only in this season, but also throughout the liturgical year. I offer a special thank you to the devoted members of the various ministries in our parishes, and especially to all those who work quietly, behind the scenes.

Maybe the Christmas message this year should be a challenge for all of us to become more involved? It is not so much a question of giving more; it is a question of giving more of ourselves. After all, that’s what God was doing when He got involved with us and our world at the first Christmas. God will fill us with His peace if there is room in our lives for Him.

In closing, my prayer is that you, your family, and your homes be filled with the blessings of Peace, Joy, and Love. At the same time, I thank you all sincerely for your thoughtful prayers, Christmas greetings, and gifts.

I wish you all a happy, holy and blessed Christmas and a better new year of 2018!

In the Love that binds us all,

Fr. Felino S. Paulino
Pastor

