



Christmas 2016

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Each year Christmas brings us a joy that is ever new, ever profound and always inspiring.

In his Apostolic Letter ending the Year of Mercy, Pope Francis spoke of the "desire for closeness to Christ." At Christmas we feel that closeness. God's Son has come to us. He came as one of us. He came out of love so that the distance between God and humanity created by sin might be overcome.

In the midst of all the duties and demands of this busy time, our longing souls sense the sacredness of the season. The birth of Jesus Christ begins God's reconciliation with the world. In the unity of God made man we glimpse signs of the longed for unity and peace of all creation--- angels speak to men, God's glory surrounds shepherds and a star leads the Magi. Led by their longings, all come to the Christ Child before whom they bow down and worship, united in their joy.

Pope Francis also observed that our desire for closeness to Christ must draw us nearer to one another. I pray that as you gather this Christmas with family and friends at Mass and in your homes, the renewed realization of God's love and desire for closeness with each one of us will unite us more closely to one another. Christ is God's greatest gift to us. He who took on human flesh and rested in a manger desires to dwell in our souls that we might all share in His glory forever.

May your worship and prayer bring a renewed sense of wonder at God's love. May that wonder bear the fruit of greater unity and love in our lives, families, Church and world in this joyful season and throughout the New Year.

With every prayerful best wish for a Blessed and Merry Christmas, I remain

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Robert J. McManus
Bishop of Worcester