



Christmas Blessings



Christmas 2019 Peace



This morning on the Mountain, we woke to find 5 inches of pristine snow covering the ground, clinging to each branch, and remaining leaf. Though it is cold, the sun rose above the clouds which looked like they were stuffed with cut August peaches and dripping with butter.

The season of food, celebration and our core cosmic relationship with God is here, despite the cold it is a new time of year.

We are at the doorway to Christmas, soon Advent, the threshold of the great feast of God's coming to us in Jesus Christ. We hear of this in the Letter to Titus and Matthew's Gospel:

"The grace of God has appeared, offering salvation to all." *Titus 2:11-14*

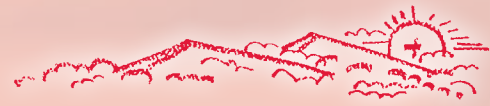
"God's greatness shall reach the ends of the earth and he shall be our peace." *Matthew 5:4*

This is Christ, born of Mary in a poor place, among poor people, in a setting that was temporary, transitory. Joseph, Mary and now their child were itinerants themselves and on the way to take responsibility for their citizenship in a country that was already taken over by another power. All of this Christ Jesus was born into and since his time people too have borne political and economic oppression. Over and over again, God seeks to set us free and asks us to live lives that would free others, that we, indeed, would be the Grace of God appearing – that we would be "offering salvation to all."

Mary, Joseph and the child to be born, offer us great witness in the place and the trials that we endure as we long for a passage from darkness into light, which is life with God, everlasting peace now and always. From the simplest of settings God rises up as the one who is "Almighty" and yet a serving God who is also all peace and all love.

The celebration of this feast of love started long before religion began or wars laid waste cities, lands and left orphans – long before the earth seemed fertile enough for us to plant and propagate. Long before all of this God was in love with us and would call us forth from his only begotten Son, Christ the Lord. God has been with us through it all!

All this seems like lofty thoughts and ideas until we open our hearts to the faces and photographs of people on these pages. God shines through the stories and the people who are here; the people that visit us at the Mountain and share their life with us there.



Since we wrote you last, there are more stories and photographs to share. God's peace and fellowship between peoples has opened here in micro ways – in little places and in little times among us here. We are called to be attentive. With this comes the awe for seeing and hearing this God among us.

Mt. Irenaeus has been a refuge for the tired student and the exalted parent - each finding their way beside each other at our Sunday Mass. Celebration in many forms is our regular habit, often it is in the silence of awe in the late night, especially now when it is cold and one looks up at the stars.

We are taken by the food and nourishment of what is over us and around us. Meals and prayers, each of them we thirst for and find here as we walk in the woods or sit at the large table. For all of this we feel gratitude and are filled with the fresh amazement of God's goodness so that we might somehow fill the world with God's kindness.

Our daily experience tells us, as we open in hope, that "He shall be our peace." As we trust God's word and presence a bit more, part of ourselves is transformed and we become hope for others and work with them for peace in our world.

Pause in your day and in the midst of all that you have to do and enjoy this collection of pictures sent with our hearts full of blessings for you. Possibly, you are planning a trip for the spring or the summer – either way you are of one family, we are together, sisters and brothers. We seek more and more in a divided world, in a country that is in turmoil, to reach out to "the small as well as the great" among us with loving tenderness.

May we continue to hold each other and all God's creatures, big and small, in the very heart of our loving God who has formed us and still forms for us as the community that bears the marks, the grace, and the spirit of Jesus Christ.

We who are blessed to live and work together for the Mountain send you our hopes for your joy, peace and love during this Christmastime and the coming year.

many's. Joe Koteln, obm Dan Michele
Kevin, ofm Lou McConicle, ofm Mary S. Mike

THE MOUNTAIN

FRANCISCAN MOUNTAIN COMMUNITY

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**HOLIDAY PRAYER
OPPORTUNITIES:**

Christmas Eve Mass
Dec. 24th, 9:00 pm

Christmas Day Mass
Dec. 25th, 11:00 am

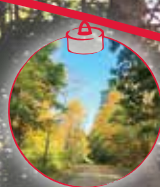
New Year's Day Mass
Jan. 1st, 11:00 am



"This will be a sign for you:
you will find an infant wrapped in swaddling clothes
and laying in a manger."

~ (Luke 2:12)

**Please visit us
at the Mountain
in 2020!**



"Climb the Mountain!"

We welcome everyone to make a visit to the Mountain in the upcoming year. Whether it is to take a hike, sit by the pond, share a meal, relax on the porch or spend a few days with us ... please know you are always welcome to join us for some time on the Mountain ... this is home for everyone!

Summer 2020 - Evenings of Re-Creation

Celebrating the Mountain's response to Jesus' call to **"Go into all the world and proclaim the Good News to the whole of creation."** (Mark 16:15)

Wednesday Evenings - July 1, 8, 15, 22, 29

5:15 pm Evening Prayer followed by quiet time on the land

6:30 pm Dish to pass supper

7:30 pm Eucharist with discussion of theme

Feel free to come to all or part of any evening and to come early to spend time on the land.

For any questions about the evenings, call the friars at 585-973-2470.