

# the Peace of the Mountain to Rest, Learn and Grow



MT. IBENAEUS





# 2020

More than ever, it seems in this year of a pandemic, confusion and politics, we long for a God who will come to be with us, who, coming among us, will remain. This is the God we celebrate, the One we proclaim and give thanks for in Christmas.

Not only for comfort do we seek God, but for healing and then for this deep lasting sense that life is both worthwhile and that life is given, that when life is lost somehow life is also sustained forever with God. These are large words, large images and large questions that come from little corners of our hearts and our own quiet times during these day.

From all time and in the fullness of time, Emmanuel, God is with us, God is here. This has been a proclamation for us from the Prophet Isaiah, "God among us has come and will not leave us." This is a deeper meaning of the simpler phrase or beautiful name, Emmanuel. To all of what is going on in the world, in our Country and in our lives, God remains present, actively with us, attending to us. The prophesy of Isaiah makes it clear: God remains, God is here.

Of course thinking or realizing this and being aware of our struggles moves us to a deeper sense of peace. God attends to us, holding us in His own heart. Our heart is the place of creativity and the images of God's heart are where we are birthed and are sustained and renewed, healed and reformed, placed again in the world to do that which is ours to do.

This movement of mystery of the Incarnation is something that has entered our life and now in Christmas we enter back into it in reflection and also in action. It is central to the beauty and the mystery of this Christmas.

I think back to family times when I was growing up with four siblings and a very involved mother and father. Our folks enjoyed parenting – most of the time, I think – and were committed to us. That was very clear.

Our home was small for seven people but we didn't think of it that way. I remember feeling the snugness of the place and it being cozy. One of the ways in which we clustered, that set us out to do what we enjoyed, was to go outdoors, venturing some where, moving out into the world. We would drive off in our old, used Pontiac and choose a place as we went, whether a park or a farmers field, somewhere near or around Rochester, New York. We had picnics in parks with other families in the summertime and enjoyed snowy fields, usually by ourselves, in the wintertime. Being out in the larger family of creatures, we knew our residence was more than our snug home on Harding Road. Early on our parents taught us by practice that we live in a larger world and it is the home for many.

My mother came from earlier generations of farmers, orchard growers and artists and so creativity was a light in our home even in times that were more meager than we realized. My father's dad was a highly respected policeman in Rochester and honored after his death with the naming of a playground after him. He died before I was born. The story was told that, "Grandpa Riley died running into a fire to save people." Children have beautiful senses of their

MERRY CHRISTMAS  
the LIGHT of GOD  
THROUGH out the YEAR  
FLYER Days



Every Christmas I read again a story called "Sharon's Christmas Prayer." I would like to share that story with you now.

*"She was five, sure of the facts, and recited them with slow solemnity, convinced every word was revelation. She said they were so poor that they had only peanut butter and jelly sandwiches to eat, and they went a long way from home without getting lost. The lady rode a donkey, the man walked and the baby was inside the lady. They had to stay in a stable with an ox and an ass (hee, hee). But the rich men found them because a star lited the roof. Shepherds came and you could pet the sheep but not feed them. Then the baby was borned. And do you know who he was? Her quarter eyes inflated to silver dollars. The baby was God. And she jumped in the air, whirled around, dove into the sofa and buried her head under the cushion, which is the only proper response to the Good News of the Incarnation."*

John Shea, "The Hour of the Unexpected," p. 68

We measure time in relation to the birth of Jesus. As Christians that is the way it should be because Jesus is the center of all time.

When we take some quiet time each day we come back to that center again and again. We come to understand that struggling people catch light from others who are fully lit and willing to show it. Just like five year old Sharon. Pope Francis shares much the same idea with us in his latest encyclical, "Brothers and Sisters Together," as a way to get beyond some of the pain in the world. I hope that you feel the presence of Jesus over and over during the coming year, and share that presence with others.

~ Fr. Lou, ofm



forebearers offering themselves up for them and this is a way of standing in our own human life story in the midst of the larger Christ story as we celebrate Christmas.

We lost our Dad early and the impact on us was great. We had illness in our family at times, but we never thought of ourselves as truly being sick or sickly. We came through it and grew, thank God. Recently we lost our older brother and that deep grieving in family rises up again along with the wonder and the joy of telling stories...of belonging.

All of this seems to be a Christmas swirl that rises and falls, but out of the darkness hidden under trees and strange places, arises the light of family life and God's love for us.

Thinking of this Christmas we know we are ultimately destined to return to God. Hopefully so many who have been or will be ill with COVID will recover as well. Christmas is birthed from God's presence, within God's presence is hope and within that hope is healing for all of us. We don't know where that healing or hope will take us, but we trust in God and we trust in one another. The encouragement and support that we learn sometimes in families and other simple small settings become essential lessons that last forever. Friendship with others and a joyful family life, even when there are tears and anger, but returning to good relationships is a year-round song about Christmas worthy to be sung now and each coming day.

As we hold in our hearts the best of our earlier times, remember those times and give thanks here at the Mountain, I hold you all in my heart, as do my brothers and our guests. We reverence your place with us at the table and by the tree and at Eucharist. The flow from Thanksgiving this year until now seems real. We need to find those things we are truly grateful for and we need to find people who will help us with our lives when that is our need.

I give thanks for so much that is given to us, for each of you who are part of our Mountain family. We pray that we might begin to give even more of who we are to those who seem, at times, to have so very little, especially of the Spirit, or seem to be lacking in hope.

Come Lord Jesus Christ, son of Mary, son of God, our Brother who entered our lives making us sisters and brothers of one another. You are our Teacher and our Light walking on trails before us and through pastures, over mountains and valleys, teaching us by lakes and telling us the world is our home and that we care for it and share it with others who live here. Show us the path and be our path, our way, and try to find the way with one another. May the God who is our way and abides with us be the light of your life and illumine your Christmas day with the brilliance of Christ's peace!

From all of the Mt. Irenaeus family ... love and all good from God,

~ Dan Riley, ofm



God's Chosen One is Born

### MERRY CHRISTMAS AND HAPPY NEW YEAR!

St. Francis reminds us that we are all brothers and sisters with each other and with all of God's creation. Wow! I was walking back to the Taylor house and the night sky deeply touched my heart. I became mindful of all of you who are part of the Mountain family.

I remembered it is in him, through him, and with him that the universe came be. Christmas is a time to celebrate the Incarnation of God with us. AMEN!

I love you all and I pray that you will have a prayerful Christmas day and a graced filled Christmas season.

Peace and good

~ Br. Joe, ofm

*Love and truth shall meet; justice and peace will kiss. Truth will spring from the earth; justice will look down from heaven. Psalm 85: 11-12*

2020 has been a rough year. Here is wishing all of us the Peace, Justice and Truth which only our blessed Father, Son and Spirit can give.

~ Love, Br. Kevin, ofm

Peace



**MT. IBENACUS**

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**HOLIDAY PRAYER  
OPPORTUNITIES:**

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

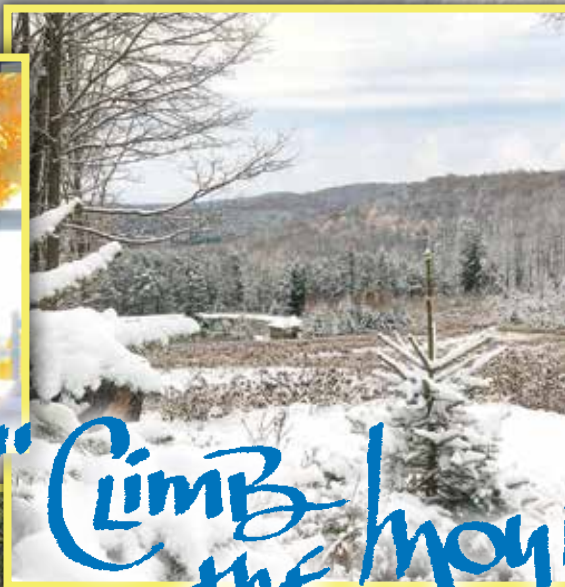
Christmas Day Mass  
Dec. 25th, 11:00 am

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

**MASS RESERVATIONS  
REQUIRED.**

Please Go To  
[www.mountainonline.org](http://www.mountainonline.org)  
for details.

*the Light Peace and Joy  
of Christmas*



*"Climb the Mountain!"*