

Dear Parishioners,

Here we are again at the beginning of a new liturgical year (year 'A' in the 3 year cycle for anyone interested in the lectionary), and approaching a new calendar year.

Of the plethora of festivals that lie ahead, the most significant during this time is one of the major events celebrated by the church, the birth of the promised Messiah, known to all as 'Christmas'.

I have a question for you to ponder... If you could give the world anything at all for Christmas, but just one thing, what would it be? Healing? Tolerance? Peace? Hope? A future? Love? Joy? A new beginning? Spend a few moments quietly to contemplate that...

...When it comes to trying to decide what to give your friends and family members, retailers are only too happy to spend a lot of money on expensive advertising designed to persuade you that they have all your loved ones could need or want. It is always helpful during this time to remember that we already have everything that we truly need in the love of Christ.

Festive bells chimed in my head at that wonderful summary of the Christmas message and reminded me of this verse in John's Gospel, "This is how much God loved the world: He gave his Son, his one and only Son." [John 3.16a – The Message]

Perhaps God, thinking of his beloved children, wondered, "What is the greatest gift I can give my family?", and concluded that He would give Himself.

It is a brilliant, radiant truth that in Jesus, God gave himself so that we would receive many, many wonderful good things, not

least the hope of unending life. That is the powerfully transformative Christmas message; the hope for all humankind that brings great joy and hope to all who take hold of it.

May your contemplations of what you might give this world inspire you to petition God in prayer. May He stir each of us to give more of ourselves to love and to serve. And may the approaching season be a time of great joy for you and all you love.

Have a wonderful Christmas,

Father Shaun +
Rector,
St. John in the Wilderness