



## CHRISTMAS 2024

My friends, I am pleased to share with you this first Christmas pastoral letter as your Archbishop. Many of you are regular Mass goers. Some of you come occasionally, once a month or so. Some come once or twice a year on the major holidays of Christmas or Easter. For others, this may be the first time you have been in a church for years or maybe even for the first time. To all of you, I say, "Welcome and merry Christmas."

Whatever your relationship with the Church may be, I invite you to consider how the moment of the Incarnation – God becoming man in Jesus Christ – has graced all of creation with the saving power of God. Throughout the course of the Church's history, great saints and poets have authored heartfelt praise to the mystery of the Incarnation in which they tried to capture what it meant that God, the Supreme Creator of all that is, became one like us. Writing in the 4<sup>th</sup> c., St. Gregory Nazianzen came close to offering a perfect blend of the poetic and the theological when he wrote:

"The very Son of God, older than the ages, the invisible, the incomprehensible, the incorporeal, the beginning of beginning, the light of light, the fountain of life and immortality, the image of the archetype, the immovable seal, the perfect likeness, the definition and word of the Father: he it is who comes... ...to take to himself all that is human, except for sin... ...He who makes rich is made poor; he takes on the poverty of my flesh, that I may gain the riches of his divinity. He who is full is made empty; he is emptied for a brief space of his glory, that I may share in his fullness."

But, while St. Gregory's words may transport us into the Mystery of the Divine Majesty of God made manifest, the greeting of the angels to the shepherds that we hear proclaimed in the Gospel of Luke lead us deeply into Christ's humanity:

"Do not be afraid; for behold, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For today in the city of David a Savior has been born for you who is Christ and Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find an infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger."

In this Christmas celebration, we recall the mystery of Christ, true God and true man, and offer thanksgiving that "God so loved the world, that he gave us his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but have eternal life," and remember that every time we celebrate the Mass we encounter the same Christ present among us in the Church gathered, in the Word proclaimed, and in the Sacrament of the Eucharist - and what a Christmas gift that is!

*\* Christopher J. Coyne*

Most Reverend Christopher J. Coyne  
Archbishop of Hartford