

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Christ is born! Glorify Him!

It is my joy to once again extend to you festal greetings and the “joy of the feast” as we continue our celebration of the Lord’s Nativity and as we also prepare to celebrate the Great Feast of Holy Theophany. May the Lord, Who was born for us in Bethlehem and Who revealed Himself at His Baptism in the Jordan, bless each one of you, your families, friends, and loved ones as we enter the New Year.

Although it falls on the Commemoration of the Lord’s Circumcision and the Feast of Saint Basil the Great, New Year’s Day is in itself not a liturgical feast. Nonetheless, it offers us the opportunity, on the first day of the calendar year, to thank God for the blessings we have received in the year gone by and to ask his blessings upon the year that is just beginning. It is my prayer and hope that the Lord will continue to bless all the members of our parish community in the coming year and that 2011 will provide ample opportunities for us to grow in love of God and one another.

Many of you are familiar with the song “Let There Be Peace on Earth.” The first lines of the song express our common hope for peace on earth: “Let there be peace on earth and let it begin with me. Let there be peace on earth, the peace that was meant to be.” As we enter the New Year we are all well aware of the many wars and conflicts between peoples and nations around the world. We also know of the violence and various forms of crime that take place in our own nation and in our own city and state. We hear about it in the news every day. In the face of this knowledge, it is our common hope and prayer that the “peace that was meant to be” will become a reality in the coming year.

But, how can this happen? How can peace break into the world? The key is found in the first line of the song just mentioned: “Let there be peace on earth *and let it begin with me.*” We can only hope for peace in the world if we ourselves are living peaceful, peace-centered (and thus Christ-centered) lives. We can only hope for peace in the world if we ourselves are peaceful people. Only if our relationships with those around and us and to the world are based on and lived in the spirit of peace.

Every January 2, the Orthodox Church commemorates the repose of Saint Seraphim of Sarov. Saint Seraphim, the great Russian mystic, who reposed on January 2, 1833, is well known throughout the Christian world as a powerful intercessor, healer, wonderworker, and spiritual father and teacher. Possibly the most well-known and most-often quoted of his spiritual teachings is “Have peace in your hearts and those around you will find their salvation.” In this saying, Saint Seraphim teaches us that the peace of the world is dependent upon *us* and upon our ability to obtain, maintain, and nurture the spirit of peace in our own lives. If we are peaceful people, the spirit of peace we carry in our hearts will influence the lives of those around us.

As we enter the New Year, let us ask Saint Seraphim to intercede for us and enable each one of us to obtain the spirit of peace in our own lives—within our homes, families, schools, places of employment, and in all the places we live our lives. And let us pray that, having obtained a spirit of peace, we may, in turn, bring that peace to the world. “Let there be peace on earth—and let it begin with **US**.”

With love in the Lord,

Father David