

# Merry Christmas

## **Christmas Message 2018**

As we gather to celebrate Christmas in 2018 it is always with a sense of gratitude that we can reflect on the blessings we have received since last Christmas. This is even the case when we have suffered loss, hardship or illness in our own lives because “Jesus” (Heb. “the one who saves”) is also “Emmanuel” (Heb. “God with us”) who, in his Incarnation, shares our joys and hopes, our joys and sorrows. By the very act of entering our reality he gave us the promise of the love and solidarity of a God whom, led by the Spirit of God, we dare to call “Abba! Father!” (Rm 8:15) Even more than that we are invited to share in the divine life and in doing so mediate God to the world: “As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have love them even as you have love me.” (Jn 17:21-23)

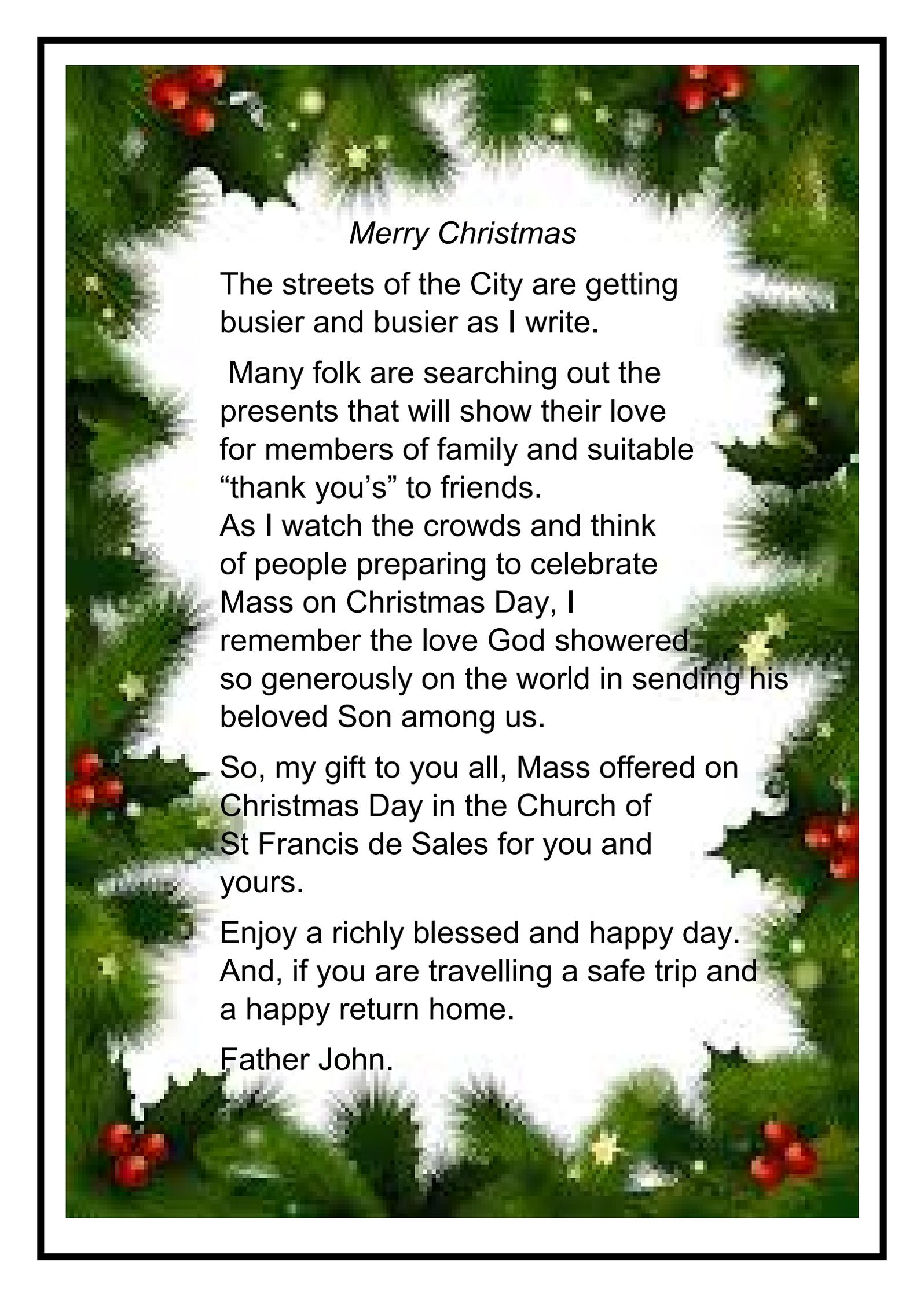
The annual celebration also builds on memories of past Christmases so that we are mindful of relationships that have formed us and the desires that motivate us to be our best selves at this time of year. We welcome the messenger of peace and ask that his gift of peace, offered to us after the resurrection, be in our hearts, our families and our world: “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger who announces peace, who brings good news, who announces salvation, who says to Zion, ‘Your God reigns’.” (Isaiah 52:7) If we cannot exult in our own deeds we can still rejoice in the Lord because our future is guaranteed in Christ Jesus: “For the yoke of their burden, and the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian.” (Isaiah 9:4)

The challenge for all Catholics, in the coming year, is to go forth in our community as “missionary disciples.” That is, to encounter Christ and to make him known. We do not seek, as Christians, to impose our beliefs on others rather we have had our own lives transformed through faith and we wish others to share the joy: “For the love of Christ urges us on, because we are convinced that one has died for all; therefore, all have died. And he died for all, so that those who live might live no longer for themselves, but for him who died and was raised for them.” (2 Cor 5:14-15) It is the joy and love we experience in Christ that makes us want to initiate dialogue with others so as to share this gift, this Good News, which holds out the promise of the wonderful liberation of God’s saving love to all. Our society struggles with loneliness, addiction and mental illness – surely, it remains in great need of such love!

The Christ child did not stay as an infant in the crib. Likewise, we should not remain as infants in faith content to be fed with milk and not solid food (cf. 1 Cor 3:1-3). Christ is also for us Jesus of Nazareth who went about healing and doing good. None of us will experience the “perfect Christmas” but we can encounter the mercy and love of God that makes us whole: “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick; I have come to call not the righteous but sinners to repentance.” (Luke 5:3 1-32) If we are yet to encounter and experience Christ in our own lives let us open our hearts to him this Christmas so that we can say along with the disciples at Emmaus: “Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?” (Luke 24:32)

I wish you all a happy and holy Christmas and a peaceful New Year.  
Fr Marcus Francis





*Merry Christmas*

The streets of the City are getting busier and busier as I write.

Many folk are searching out the presents that will show their love for members of family and suitable “thank you’s” to friends.

As I watch the crowds and think of people preparing to celebrate Mass on Christmas Day, I remember the love God showered so generously on the world in sending his beloved Son among us.

So, my gift to you all, Mass offered on Christmas Day in the Church of St Francis de Sales for you and yours.

Enjoy a richly blessed and happy day. And, if you are travelling a safe trip and a happy return home.

Father John.