

## After the Heart of Jesus ...

What wonderful Christmas celebrations we had! The music, the decorations, and the people mirrored the joy, the hope, and faith we celebrated in praising God for sending us His Savior Son. I hope that you were as uplifted and inspired as I was. Thank you to everyone who contributed in any way to our Christmas celebrations as ministers of the Word or Communion, as altar servers, in art and environment, as ushers or ministers of hospitality, or through music and song. A special thank you to those who helped in welcoming new people to St. Walter during the Christmas Masses.



Thank you, as well, for the tremendous generosity shown throughout the Advent and Christmas Season as we reached out to those in need through the parish Giving Tree. Thank you, too, for the great generosity shown to the parish in our Christmas collection so that we might continue the mission of Christ locally. And thank you for the personal generosity shown to Father Mario and me in the cards, goodies, money and gifts given to us.

In these final days of December after Christmas we celebrate two important feasts in our Church. We celebrate the Feast of the Holy Family, and on Tuesday, New Year's Day, we celebrate the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God. In looking at the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, we see them as models of relationship, faith, and trust in God, and if we can model our families after theirs, then we, too, can become holy. Let us remember in a special way all of our families, both far and near, as we gather for the Eucharist this weekend.

The Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God, on January 1, gives us an opportunity to begin the year with a special celebration that can help set the tone well for the rest of the year. We read in the Gospels how Mary reflected on the events of her and Jesus' life and kept them close to her heart. In seeing her role at the *Theotokos* (Mother of God), these events took on deeper meaning. When we see our role at *Bearers of God* today, the events of our lives take on their deeper meaning.



The Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God, is a Holy Day of Obligation, and Mass attendance is expected. It also provides a beautiful opportunity to begin the new year in prayer and to pray for peace. Our Masses are on New Year's Eve at 5:00 PM and on New Year's Day at 9:00 AM and 11:00 AM.

Two resources have recently been made available to our families. The Parish Guide Books / Phone Directories were mailed to all registered families. We've added new sections in the phone directory to help us grow in faith – a list of family prayers for various times of the year, lists of patron saints, and a guide to bible passages. The 2008 calendars are now available for all families. Please take one for you home. Thank you to all the businesses who help make our directories, calendars, and bulletins free resources for our parishioners.

If there are any last-minute, end-of-the year gifts that you want included in 2006 for tax purposes, they need to be returned to the parish house by Sunday evening, December 31, 2007. There is a drop off slot by the main entrance of the house to place these contributions.

Later in January, Father Mario will be traveling back to the Philippines to visit his sister and other family members. He also uses the opportunity to provide birthday parties for poor children who otherwise do not have birthday parties. Envelopes to help this mission are available in the pews and may be returned in the collection next Sunday, January 5/6.

From Father Mario and Father Phil and all the staff at St. Walter Church, may the New Year bring good health, peace, and much joy to you and yours.



Joyous New Year!  
*Father John*