



THE RT. REV. STEVEN ANDREW MILLER, D.D.

BISHOP OF MILWAUKEE

December 20, 2017

Dear Friends in Christ,

Cindy and I are downsizing, which means that both of us are going through accumulated belongings. For me, these include some treasures from my childhood that I have not been able to let go of until now. On some, the jury is still out. For others, the time has come to let them go. Whatever category an item may be in, what I am reminded of this year, is that each was a gift, whether from my parents, grandparents, or aunts and uncles, which was chosen with care and given with love. This awareness reminds me of the sacramental nature of all gifts as visible and tangible signs of love and care.

My most treasured gift remains the nativity set my Grandmother Miller gave me when I was six. She had watched me admire (and perhaps play a little too roughly) with hers. I have treasured it ever since. I see this gift as one of the many ways she nurtured and encouraged my vocation to ordained ministry. For many years, I have placed the baby Jesus from the set on the altar as I celebrate the midnight mass as a sign of remembrance and thanksgiving for her love and encouragement.

At Christmas, we remember God the Father's gift of his Son Jesus, a fulfillment of the scripture that God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son. We receive that gift in Word and Sacrament, in fellowship and song. What an amazing gift it is! This is a gift that is meant to be shared in word and deed just as my grandmother did in giving me the crèche but also by giving me the example of her faithful leadership in the Church as she led the effort to begin a new congregation in her community when I was in high school.

This Christmas I encourage you to share the gift of your faith in the incarnate love of God by your words and actions. The message of God's abundant love is one so many need to hear. You know that message, "Be not afraid! To you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord." This was the angelic message to the shepherds in the fields, and it is the angelic message to us as well. Our calling having heard this message is to live lives shaped by this Good News, lives of faith, lives of fearlessness, lives of hope, lives of joy.

May God bless you richly this Christmas and throughout the coming year.

Yours in Christ

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "S. Andrew Miller".

The Rt. Rev. Steven Andrew Miller
Bishop of Milwaukee

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