



DIOCESE OF GRAND RAPIDS

Office of the Bishop

Christmas 2005

Dear Friends,

For some weeks and months we have been preparing to celebrate the birth of the Lord at Christmas. We do this each year as we recall the mystery of salvation. God has come to earth and made His dwelling place amongst us. On my first Christmas as the newly installed Bishop of Grand Rapids, I want to extend my greetings to the people of the Diocese of Grand Rapids and to all people of Good Will. It is my prayer for all that the Lord who came to bring us life and grace will pour out his generous blessing upon us. I extend this blessing and these greetings with a deep appreciation for the warmth and welcome that I have received in coming here to serve as bishop.

It is easy for faith filled people to be tempted to be critical of the way so many in our society choose to celebrate this great feast of our salvation. At times it is overly commercialized and paganized. For some it has become just another special holiday. Such criticism, however, serves little useful purpose except at times to make us seem more righteous. The energy we spend on criticism might be better directed to looking into our own hearts and souls, and assess the kind of dwelling place we have made for the Savior.

The Second Reading from the Mass at Midnight puts the great feast in focus for us. It announces the good news and proclaims a challenge for all believers.

Beloved:

The grace of God has appeared, saving all and training us to reject godless ways and worldly desires and to live temperately, justly, and devoutly in this age, as we await the blessed hope, the appearance of the glory of our great God and savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to deliver us from all lawlessness and to cleanse for himself a people as his own, eager to do what is good.

May we ever be worthy recipients of God's Word and persevere in our lives. May we be ever eager to accept the appearance of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.

May the blessing of this Holy Season be with all people of Good Will.

Blessed Christmas,

*Most Reverend Walter A. Hurley
Bishop of Grand Rapids*