

## 2016 Christmas Message from the Pastor

*Dear Parish Family of Assumption,*

*First and most importantly, I pray for each of our 1650 households who belong to our “little flock”, on the banks of the Saugatuck. My prayer is that this Christmas bring each “domestic Church” (family and home) the deepest feeling of being so loved by God that he sent us on Christmas the very best...His only Son, Jesus the Christ.*

*As you may know, the Diocese which is referred to as the “Local Church” and geographically is Fairfield County, completed a Synod: all Catholic Parishes (84), Schools, Catholic Communities gathered for meetings under the leadership of our new Bishop Frank. We were inspired and motivated to go back to our parishes and renew efforts to be Christ for one another. Mandated by Bishop Frank, we formed a third Parish Council: the Parish Pastoral Planning Council headed by Jim Meehan. As a Council we identified three areas in which we wish to grow and experiment—Evangelization, Family Life and Community Life.*

*To evangelize is to share the good news, religious knowledge and updated ideas concerning our ancient, sacred, and holy truths. To this end, we have had two Teaching Masses (thanks to Marian Compana our Parish Evangelist) and have begun plans for Sunday Evenings in Lent of 2017.*

*In February there are plans to provide “A Night to Shine Prom” (an outreach to our Special Needs Community; ages 14 and up) led by Nicole Mascera. September and Bryon Stevens have assisted Fr. Tom in hosting three Christmas Open Houses for our Parish Ministers in the Rectory (the Stevens’ chair our Community Life outreach). In the Spring and Fall more Community Life events will be offered along with Family Life outreach headed up by Gretchen & Joe Mancuso.*

*I wish to acknowledge at Christmas and New Year my thanks to a wonderful Staff who always work together for the good of the Lord and Parish Mission. I am deeply appreciative of our past and present priests and deacons who serve us: currently, Fr. Augustine, Msgr. Shea, Fr. Denis, SJ and Deacon Abelardo.*

*Thank you to our former and current Trustees who keep a close eye on me and all levels of Parish Life, upon whom I rely for guidance and correction. Many thanks to Joe Cardello, Mike O’Loughlin and our Finance Council who help me do the math and make certain, “if I have ten dollars, not to spend eleven!”*

*I am grateful to Maureen Belford, Ronnie Estony and our Parish Council for the difficult and faithful work they joyfully do. It takes many hands and hearts to accomplish all that happens here at Assumption. We provide religious education to 600 of our precious children. We reach out to our High School Youth. Frank Matto and the choir prepare sacred music for our many Liturgical settings. Keeping the Church immaculate, and decorated; caring for and feeding the poor; and welcoming and preparing new members to join the Catholic Community requires many dedicated people. To those who stock the Food Closet, those who comfort the bereaved, or visit residents at the Health Care Center, your work is gratefully acknowledged. Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and Vocation efforts; keeping the Parish Website up to date; preparing families for Weddings, Funerals or Baptisms; coordinating the Altar Servers and/or the Ministers at the Altar; or interacting with the Westport Interfaith Council is the work of more than a few. Many hands make much work light.*

*Besides all these good works and activities the Parish provides, I am privileged to serve as chaplain to both the Westport Fire and Police Departments. The Community is blessed with such dedicated women and men who protect us from harm here in Westport. Likewise I am honored to serve as chaplain to the FBI with Division Headquarters in New Haven. They too are a group of professional women and men who serve us and our nation under very stressful times. Please pray for their safety as they, the Fire Fighters, Police and FBI keep us safe!*

*Finally, let me end where I began...with the 1650 family households who belong to our “little flock”! I hope each of you would always feel a warm welcome and know that I am a phone call away in any time of need. Having arrived here on Feb. 5<sup>th</sup>, 1999 this is my 18<sup>th</sup> Christmas with you. Each year we grow and it is because of you. The parishioners at Assumption are extraordinarily dedicated, generous, warm and welcoming.*

*The Staff: Michelle, Judy, Nancy, Cathy, Nhur, Dolly, Michele, Frank, Aidan and Dennis provide service and support for our various Ministers who serve on all three Parish Councils: Finance, Parish and Pastoral Planning as well as the important Committees that reflect parish life and service.*

*May Christmas bring peace to our world and parish family. As for the New Year...as we officially end the Year of Mercy 2016...let all see that at Assumption mercy continues to be the hallmark of our Parish life!*

*I shall renew my efforts to always see Christ in you and in advance, I thank you for your mercy when I fail. As our parish women often tell me, I tell you... “Go gently, please be kind to yourself and all shall be well.”*

*Christmas and New Year blessings,*

*Father Tom, Pastor*