

By Pat Haggerty

Just as everyone has their Christmas traditions, so too, do we have our post-Christmas traditions or rituals. Some people like to take the tree down the day after the holy day. When it's over, it's over! Others, like me, prefer to languish in the beauty of the season and keep the tree and decorations up at least until the Epiphany. I hate to lose sight of that beautiful, glistening tree bedecked with ornaments that have meaning. Many hold a story and one can reminisce quite easily on the angel from Hawaii, the ceramic penguin given by a student, the red ball that has lost its luster after over 50 years.

Not only do I enjoy the tree, but I also like to look back at the cards received during the season. They hold memories too---of friendships shared and relatives loved. They hold stories in and of themselves but also in newsletters carefully crafted to tell of the year's adventures. Some of these stories are not so positive and speak of challenges, illness or transitions. After reading these, all we can do is pray for these individuals and ask God to strengthen them.

Some of the cards are worth keeping because of their inspirational messages, which can serve as reflections throughout the year. One such card had the words, "God's Love," inscribed on the front. It read: "Long ago, one silent night, God revealed His glory bright. His own image came to man for salvation's matchless plan. Jesus, Saviour, Shepherd, King---Lord of all to you we bring. Praises, wonder, thanks, and love for this gift from God above."

This message, though simple, is a stark reminder of the fact that Jesus came to us as part of

God's plan for our salvation. What a marvel and what a gift! We need to continually thank our God for such a gift and to emulate the example of Jesus as we travel on our own life-journey.

The message on the card was extended for me when I heard the first reading on the Wednesday after the Epiphany. It is taken from the first letter of St. John (vs.4). It begins: "Beloved, if God so loved us, we also must love one another. No one has ever seen God. Yet, if we love one another, God remains in us, and his love is brought to perfection in us . . . Moreover, we have seen and testify that the Father sent his Son as savior of the world. Whoever acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God remains in him and he in God."

Christmas may be over, but I will cling to the message of "God's Love" and to the words of St. John. They will help guide me throughout the New Year!