

# The Holiday Season

by Fr. Jim Kent, OFM Conv., Director

Beginning with Thanksgiving and taking us through the Solemnity of Epiphany, we celebrate a holiday season like none other throughout the year. These two events bookend other special days—especially for the Church—including the Immaculate Conception (patroness of the United States), Our Lady of Guadalupe (Patroness of the Americas), Christmas, and New Year's Day, where we not only mark the start of a new year but honor Mary, Mother of God. It is truly *the* holiday season.



The word holiday comes from the Old English word *hāligdæg*, which is a coupling of *hālig* “holy” and *dæg* “day.” While the secular meaning has come to mean a time dedicated to celebrating, when we consider its original meaning to wish someone “Happy Holidays” is, from a Christian standpoint, to wish one Happy Holy Days!

Thanksgiving has long been part of American folklore. It has been shaped by both that first time the native peoples and pilgrims sat together and shared the bounty of the harvest to the bountiful meal celebrated today between family and friends, and by those who have a horn of plenty and by those in need. But more than food and drink, Thanksgiving has been about gratitude for our blessings, whether great or small, and in how they are best manifested in the presence of one another.

The sense of that presence points towards God's presence in and through the Incarnation, the word becoming flesh and dwelling among us. Anytime we celebrate the Eucharist, a word that means thanksgiving, we are nourished by Sacred Scripture and the Body and Blood of Christ, and give praise and thanks to our God for these very gifts.

While Thanksgiving is formally a secular holiday, it has religious roots that nurtures us throughout the holiday—holy day—season. May these celebrations lead us all into a deeper sense of gratitude for each other and for the Giver of such blessings.