Do you ***know*** that God ***loves*** you? “Yeah, I know.” But do you ***know*** that God loves you by faith, or by faith ***and*** because this message of Jesus himself has found a home in you – a home ***in*** your heart? There’s a world of difference between reciting a truth and allowing that truth to shape how we see ourselves, how we live, and how we relate to others.

In the Bible, ‘to ***know’*** some-***thing*** or some-***one*** implies not just head knowledge, but the intimacy of heart knowledge — the kind of ***knowing*** that comes from mutuality in relationship, presence, and experience. When we celebrate Mass, we’re offered the opportunity not just to remember God’s love, but to *encounter* it — tangibly and powerfully — in the person of Jesus, and through the gentle intercession of His holy family, Saint Mary and Saint Joseph, who ***knew*** what it meant to ***know*** God’s love – even in difficult circumstances such as the flight to Egypt.

The Bible has often been described as God’s love letter to humanity, and this is surely Paul’s intention in his letter to the Colossians — our second reading — when he says, “You are God’s chosen race, his saints; he ***loves*** you.” These are not abstract, distant words, but words loaded with meaning to be received, pondered over, and experienced. I wonder what it’s like to hear those words addressed to *you* personally, not to the congregation, not to someone holier or more knowledgeable than you, but to you as you are right now. As Jesus says, “Come as you are; ***that’s*** how I want you. I have created you because I love you.”

When I was 18 years old, and halfway through basic training in the army, I received a letter from this girl I ***really*** liked called Jane Lomaz. When you receive a letter or any mail on basic training, all 40 recruits line up either side of the corridor and wait in hope for the instructor to

call out your name. When the Sergeant called my name, he sniffed at the letter, and had a wry smile of his face as he handed it to me. Now, Jane wasn't professing her love for me – we were only 18 years old – but the perfume on the letter said far more than the ink, and as I read the letter, I felt ***known*** and ***seen***! To tie off the story and perhaps curb your curiosity,,, Jane and I didn't work out. If you're watching the live stream Jane, it was me, not you!

'Knowledge' of God's love necessarily extends to more than head knowledge: what we hear, read, or even faithfully assent to. It becomes ***more*** real in a human sense, when it is received, welcomed, and allowed to leave its mark on us — much like that letter did for me all those years ago.

While in the Christian journey, prayerfully reading the Bible is the surest way to encounter the Love of the Lord, the context of family life offers most people — not all, because some people don't have good experiences of family life — but offers ***most*** people 'knowledge' that they are loved because they experience being 'known' and 'seen' by those who love them. They are noticed, listened to, forgiven, and welcomed back. Hopefully that's been your experience this Christmas. How much more — and how much more perfectly though — does God love those whom He has created, you and I, who are never forgotten, never overlooked, and never beyond His mercy?

And so, let's together express our desire to **know** God's love as we celebrate the Holy Family and ***this*** Holy Eucharist, giving thanks for the year that's been, and looking in hope to the gift of a new year filled with peace, love, and joy. Jesus, Mary and Joseph, pray for us.