

*Friends,*

*I love how Christmas decorations have a way of transforming the ordinary into the extraordinary. The sights and sounds of this beautiful season are so uplifting that even people who know nothing of Jesus' birth are swept up in the holiday spirit.*

*Beautiful transformations are something we are blessed to witness year-round at Catholic Charities as we walk with people of all ages and backgrounds on journeys from hardship to hope.*

*People like Matthew, who at two years old entered the foster care system due to violence and substance abuse at home. Struggling with trauma, he eventually came to Marygrove. With loving care and professional support, Matthew is now a 17 year-old in the transitional living program, working part-time while taking classes to become an electrician. He enjoys drawing, video game design, and making people laugh!*

*Sometimes hardships come later in life. Thomas was chronically homeless and out of work. He enrolled in our Pathways to Progress empowerment program after being shot in an attempt to steal his last five dollars. Three years later, his family and friends cheered as Thomas crossed the stage at the first Pathways graduation. He proudly maintains a steady job, pays his own bills, and has an apartment to call his own.*

*As we enter the Holy Season, I invite you to join me in praying for those we served in 2019, those who will seek hope and comfort from us in 2020, and all who help make these beautiful transformations possible, our staff, volunteers, donors, board members, and other supporters.*

*Wishing you a blessed Christmas season!*

*Theresa E. Ruzicka*

*Theresa E. Ruzicka, CPA*

*President, Catholic Charities of St. Louis*

