

FROM OUR PAROCHIAL VICAR



As we approach this third Sunday of Advent, the subject of *joy* is the predominant theme. In fact, the Church calls this particular Sunday *Gaudete* Sunday for a reason.

Rejoice is what Gaudete means.

We hear from St Paul in his letter to the Thessalonians: "*rejoice always. Pray without ceasing. In all circumstances give thanks.*" Again, the theme of rejoicing is the predominant theme. And yet, so often, this season is difficult for us because we have experienced so many challenges. Perhaps we may even say to ourselves: "Rejoice? How is it possible to rejoice? I could see the sense in rejoicing if my circumstances were different, but alas, in the midst of the mess I find myself in, rejoicing is not for me!"

It's a well-documented fact that serious bouts of depression, and sadly even suicide attempts spike drastically this time of the year. One could say that the Grinch is very active indeed! And the more I contemplate this fact, the more convinced I am of the reason for it. As one spiritual writer puts it: "our society has bought into a cultural lie, which is an illusion! "The lie that everyone's life is supposed to be filled with sunshine; and when it is not, luck will change it, things will work out well, and the sunny carefree times will return." Isn't it true? We can sometimes buy into the lie that: "If only these struggles would go away, then I could have joy and peace". But that is not true at all! The reality of the situation is that many who *seem to 'have it all'* are those who find themselves empty and joyless because the human heart cannot be satisfied with any earthly thing. Even if we were to get everything we wanted and all struggles somehow disappeared from life, without Christ, we would be like disappointed children who tear open the last Christmas gift and wistfully look up at their parents: "Is this all there is?"



It's interesting to note that Saint Paul wrote to the Thessalonians from prison. He had nothing in prison and yet he also had everything! He had Christ and so he had every reason to rejoice! Do we?

- Father Dort

WEEKLY REFLECTION

OPEN THE GATES

It is a source of inexhaustible joy to know that God comes to the world to serve humanity and to give us a share in his holiness. It would be a great mistake to refuse this joy.

Yet, it is a much too simple way to prepare the great mystery of Christmas, if you only remain a spectator in your joy over God's arrival as a human being.

The essential part is that you let God come to you – that you "open wide the gates" for him. Sharing in the great joy of Christmas means "doing" something, for example, demonstrating the will to form your life according to the



mystery that Christmas announces. Perhaps you make a decision to devote a little more time to prayer each day, or to show kindness toward someone in your life who seems unsympathetic to you.

You soon become aware that you aren't even able to fulfill these little decisions fully. But precisely by becoming conscious of how powerless you are, a door is opened in you where the savior can enter.

As long as you haven't plumbed the depth of your own powerlessness, you are really close to the great joy Jesus brings. But if you have painfully experienced your own inability, then you are open and receptive to the liberating message of Christmas.

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