

December 15-16, 2018
Third Sunday of Advent - Gaudete (REJOICE!)
Zephaniah 3:14-18 Philippians 4:4-7 Luke 3:10-18

As guilty as the next person, I too have carelessly used terms/words of affection for assorted THINGS: I 'LOVE' a particular dessert (or bacon), I 'LOVE' a particular song or artist, I 'LOVE' a certain fragrance, experience or situation. In the same way that people will say they 'love' their pet, there is not much wiggle room to differentiate the LOVE we hold for a sweater, ice cream sundae or beagle from how we LOVE our children, spouse or God. Our language has at times become muddled and such can easily occur with the word JOY. On this Gaudete Weekend, the word REJOICE is highlighted, an apt expression as our Christmas celebrations draw near. Regrettably, the word and concept of JOY has become interchangeable with a variation of happiness or something pleasant. Happiness comes and goes, as do pleasant feelings/situations. Liberally splashed throughout this past year have been abundant experiences that were NOT happy or pleasant: fires, mass shootings, unexpected diagnosis', family disruptions, personal betrayals and all the other things that have wounded our communal and private lives. None of these things have been HAPPY but I propose to you that they have been occasions in which the JOY of having a relationship with Jesus has enabled us to endure and pass through whatever pain and despair in which life has immersed us. Some might say it is the strength of the 'human spirit' that allows us to rise above our losses and hurts but as people of faith we are encouraged to consider from whence that 'human spirit' has come? It is not something purchased or available in bulk at Costco. The capacity to face whatever each day brings, while shouldering the struggles, disappointments or anguish that may surround us, is a GRACE given by God. Joy does not denote happiness, JOY is about survival, about passing through the darkness even when we may not know where we are going. JOY is what sustains us when we are crippled by pain, wrenched by loss and overwhelmed by emptiness. Happiness comes and goes...JOY – the presence of Jesus within our lives, is what carries us through the darkness.

As Christmas draws ever nearer, thank you for sharing this weekend with our Santa Clara community. This weekend we are invited to contribute to a MOST WORTHY Second Collection, benefitting the **Retired Religious of the United States as well as the Retired Clergy of the Diocese of Orange**. The Religious Communities of our youth, presuming there would always be an abundance of vocations, never imagined the long-term support and health care needs of their members would be shouldered by an evaporating 'pool' of active men and women religious. This collection, accepted throughout the United States this weekend, is an effort to alleviate some of these shortages, as well as assist in the care of our own, Diocese of Orange retired clergy. Thank you for your consideration and generosity. **THIS SUNDAY is also the Annual RECTORY CHRISTMAS OPEN HOUSE (5475 Bayberry Way) from 2pm to 5pm.** You are invited to stop by for a visit as you go about your many other holiday tasks. Please be careful in parking on nearby streets so as to not block anyone's driveway. The Bulletin has more information on upcoming events as well as a reminder of the Christmas Eve/Day Mass Schedules. As you consider the JOY that has enabled you to pass through your own life struggles, on this day, please also remember, you are loved. FKB