



## December 5, 2021

### Second Sunday of Advent

*"I pray always with joy in my every prayer for all of you..." Philippians 1:4*

Dear Friends;

A second grade girl came home from school. She told her father, *"We have a new boy in our class. He is from Haiti."* Her father asked, *"Does he speak English?"* "No" came her reply, *"But that isn't important because he laughs in English!"* Laughter is a universal gift that can transcend language and culture.

To be able to laugh at the absurdities and incongruities of life is a blessing. To be able to laugh at one's own faults and foibles liberates from the oppression of taking ourselves too seriously. Someone once said that *"Joy is the infallible sign of the presence of God."*

Our first reading comes from the Prophet Baruch. This work was written to exiles who will be returning home after nearly seventy years of displacement. It will be a long arduous journey. They will find the City of Jerusalem in a decayed state (much like Detroit or St. Louis which are only half the size they were sixty or seventy years ago). And the Temple, the sign of the presence of God among his people, is a ruin. But the prophet urges the people to cast aside their "robe of mourning and misery."

In place of sorrow and anxiety the prophet encourages the people to hope. God is going to do something new. God will create a new society wrapped in the cloak of justice and on their heads they will wear a band not with a Nike symbol but the very name of God! The old had to be cleared away to prepare for the new. God will bring them back to a new home and it will be joy that paves the way. So stop thinking about the way it used to be. Look for what is to come.

Our reading from Baruch connects with our reading from Luke. John the Baptist like Baruch is calling people to prepare for the new world that is coming. The place where he baptizes, on the river in the wilderness, recalls the first time Israel entered together the Promised Land. Somewhere along the way people had forgotten the justice and mercy of God. Greed and pride had polarized people into the haves and the have nots. John is calling people to change their minds (the meaning of repentance). People must live the vision of God's justice and mercy if the Kingdom is to come.

In our reading from the Letter to the Philippians St Paul is filled with joy even as he writes from imprisonment. What makes Paul rejoice is the close relationship he has with the Philippian community. The thing that makes him happiest is that community has continued the work of proclaiming the Gospel to others. His personal circumstances do not affect his joy. Joy is not the absence of pain or difficulty. Joy is the awareness of the loving presence of God within you.

In his first major pastoral letter, **The Joy of the Gospel**, Pope Francis (like John the Baptist) calls us to prepare a new path for bringing God's joy to the world. *"The joy of the Gospel fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus. Those who accept his offer of salvation are set free from sin, sorrow, inner emptiness and loneliness. With Christ joy is constantly born anew...I wish to encourage the Christian faithful to embark upon a new evangelization marked by this joy..."*

Come Lord Jesus!

*Fr Ron*