



Living with Joy

Some of you are aware that the third Advent candle is often pink. I'm not sure why, but it seems to be Mary's candle, the candle of joy.

Those who have gone through the pain and joy of childbirth can tell us about that. It's sort of like the Advent season – it's coming, it's coming, it's coming – but Christmas never seems to get here fast enough! Then there is the birth and the joy of a new life in this world.

The world is out there right now enticing us with all kinds of gifts and delights, songs of the "holiday season", bright lights and the like. It is difficult not to get in the swing of things. I have to admit, I love putting up the Christmas tree(s) and looking at all the ornaments that have been accumulated over all the years. Some are retired every year and others take their place. The ones that have come from family and friends are so important. Each one reminds us of time spent with them over the years. We have some reminding us of football loyalties and others announcing the joy of college graduations. There are home made ones. My favorite one is about 25 years old and comes from the Sunday School in my first parish. It is red ribbon tied around a styrofoam ball with a little red ribbon on top. And, painted with love on the ball it says "Paster". I don't think I'll ever "retire" that one.

I hope you are enjoying the getting ready stuff. This is the time of joy all around. Let's not let the hubbub of the time get us down. Enjoy.

On the other hand, also don't get so involved with the preparations that you forget the big birthday and the twelve days of celebration we have following that big day. I'm afraid the big celebration gets lost as we come to Christmas day and say "well, that's it for the year!" No, we have 12 days to celebrate – make use of them. We also need to remember that there are those for whom the season will not be happy. God has given us a time of joy, but the world has decreed that some will suffer, even as the season goes on. Some will be separated from family. Some families will separate themselves as they deny the peace God has given us.

We have a mission this season. We need to wish the world a Merry Christmas, times of good cheer, joyful celebration of the birth of Christ and let all who hear know that there is good news to be heard. And let's not stop at the 25th of December. Let's let the world know that God didn't get born just so we could have a holiday during the dark days of the year. That manger is the beginning of a new world. It is the time when God came to us and started walking this earth with us and for us. It is the time when God said, "I'm going to find out what it's like to be one of my people and show them the best way to walk." You see, it's only the beginning – and we are called on to continue the walk and show the world that it can be done.

I hope your preparations are going well. Give a lot and you will find yourself showered with more gifts than the world has ever dreamed were available. Merry Christmas everyone!

TAK

--- Thoughts of the Week

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