

# FROM THE DESK OF **Fr. Julius**

Brothers and sisters in Christ; Grace and peace!



Today's Entrance Antiphon~ *Gaudete in Domino semper -- Rejoice in the Lord Always!* ushers in the traditional Gaudete Sunday, this third week of Advent. The scriptural reminder is to rejoice always, pray always, give thanks always, not just on Sundays! These past two weeks we were calmly absorbed with the anticipation that "the Lord is coming." Now in passing the midway point, as our liturgy brings us ever closer to the nearness of Jesus our Lord, we turn from the more somber purple to the warmer, rose-colored candle; even the celebrants' vestments bear the pretty rose tones today

In our First Reading, Isaiah proclaims the most luminous observations of salvation history – that the promised Messiah is coming to save and liberate the Israelites from bondage, and will make "*justice and praise spring up before all the nations.*" In the Responsorial psalm, Mary's Magnificat exults "*My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.*" This glorious canticle, inspired by the Holy Spirit, serves as a perfect segue between the Old and New Testament. As if to match Mary's elation, St. Paul's words to the Thessalonians inflames the early Christians to "*rejoice always.*" Paul inspires them to lead a faithful and blameless life amid the promise of our Lord's Divine Coming.

In last week's starkness, St. John the Baptist announces Our Lord who comes to baptize with the Holy Spirit. In this Sunday's Gospel, the Baptist comes to *attest* to the Light, Jesus Christ. Imagine the impact of that event, offering people a second chance, like a hand pulling us out of the deep cold! The coming of Jesus the Light into the world is the cause for our rejoicing!

Our Lord comes to dwell in our hearts, today and always, calling us to bear witness to this Light. He does not care if the halls are decked or what presents are wrapped. That is why as I said last Sunday, the best present we can give to ourselves, to our family members and our friends is the gift of forgiveness. It is our calling to infuse our lives with Christ's Light; an invitation to walk with Him, talk with Him, even live like Him. He calls us to radiate and shed light in the sometimes-shadowy lives of others around us – sharing love, overflowing mercy, unconditional forgiveness, and humble service. May we prayerfully bring ourselves, our brothers and sisters into the light and the riches of Christ. Amen!

Rejoice Always and a Joyous Advent!