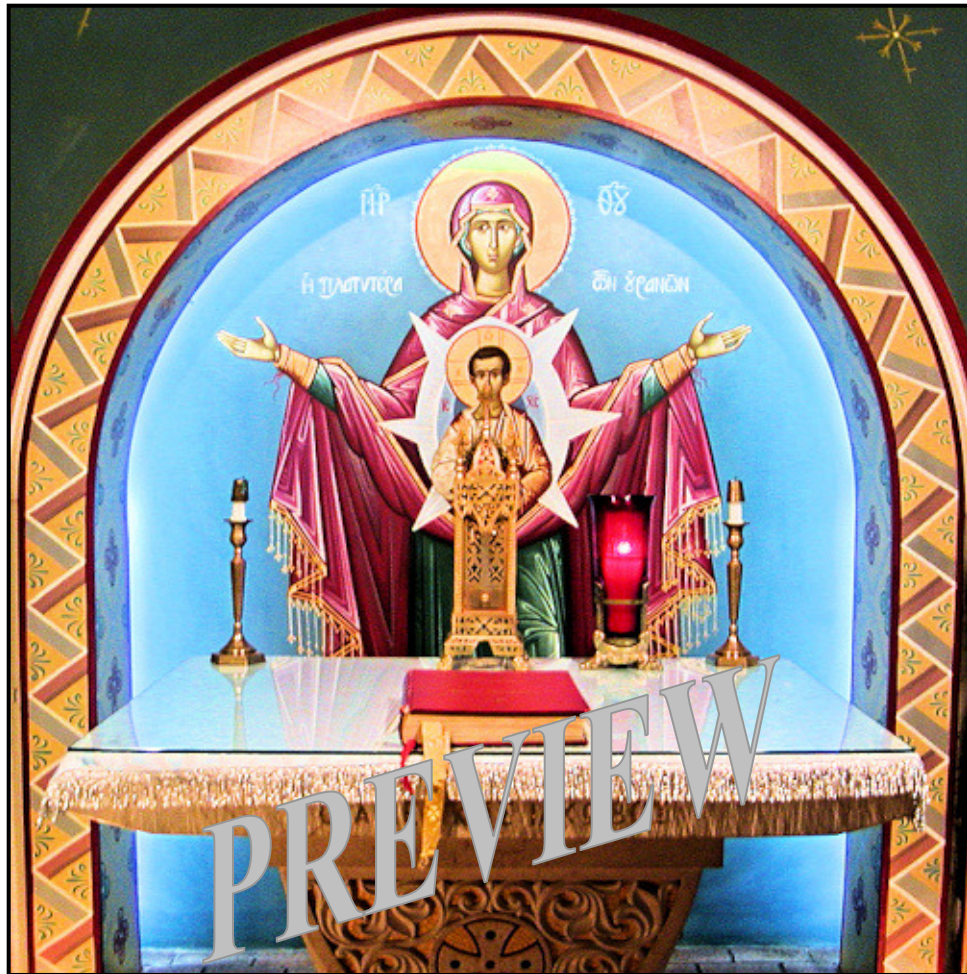




Heralding Joy to the World

Rediscovering Our Vocation of Joy



The Good News Daily Reflections

for the Seasons of Advent and Christmas

2009

Liturgical Year II & Sunday Cycle C

By Terry A. Modica

First Sunday of Advent

November 29

Jeremiah 33:14-16

Ps 25:4-5, 8-10, 14

1 Thes 3:12-4:2

Luke 21:25-28, 34-36

www.usccb.org/nab/112909.shtml

What's been stealing your joy? This Advent, let's prepare for Christmas by asking Jesus to restore our joy. Today's world needs Christians who know that following Christ truly gives us hope in the midst of financial worries, comfort in the midst of hardships and joy despite all difficulties.

Taking this even further, today's world needs Catholics who truly understand that going to Mass is a good thing. Are you changed by the presence of Christ in the Word and in the Eucharist? If so, then when you exit the church, you are filled with joy – right? And others see this joy – right?

There's a difference between "knowing" the truths of our faith and authentically living these truths. And our authenticity is what others need from us.

Think of the prayer requests you've made in which you're still waiting for Jesus to provide his help. When you offer them to Jesus during the prayers of Mass, do you feel hopeful? There is no joy without first experiencing hope.

During the consecration of the Eucharist, the priest asks Jesus to free us from all anxieties. We cannot feel hopeful when anxiety prevents us from recognizing that Jesus is coming to us in the Eucharist.

In Luke 21:25-28, 34-36, Jesus speaks of his Second Coming, but we can also relate it to our daily lives today. Think of the possibility of new tribulations looming just ahead, unknown and unpredictable. Jesus wants to help you prepare for this. However, when our focus is on our troubles instead of on Christ, we're ruled by anxiety, not hope, and certainly not joy.

When our hearts become spiritually drowsy, we forget to remain centered in Christ. We neglect to listen for the guidance of the Holy Spirit. But when we ask



Jesus to restore our joy, we become vigilant, expectant, and aware that we have to rely on him for the strength to endure whatever comes our way.

What the world fears is a reason for anxiety is in reality – for true Christians – a reason to hope in Jesus and to live in the joy that comes from trusting him. It's not easy! It takes conscious effort. But spiritual drowsiness is a miserable way to live.

Questions for Personal Reflection:

- † What are you waiting for from Jesus?
- † How will you use the Season of Advent to overcome anxiety by noticing the loving, generous, merciful activities of God?

Questions for Faith Sharing:

- † What are your favorite ways to prepare for Christmas?
- † How do you make Advent a season of hope and a time of growing closer to God? Share your ideas with the other community members and listen for new ideas that you can adopt.

Monday - November 30

St. Andrew: Pray for family relationships

Romans 10:9-18

Ps 19:8-11

Matt 4:18-22

www.usccb.org/nab/113009.shtml**Our vocation of joy starts at home**

As Christians, we all have the vocation of continuing the ministry of Christ. Through baptism, we have been joined to his purposes. We are called and empowered by his Spirit to serve as his hands reaching out to others, his feet going to the places where we can do the work of God's Kingdom, and his voice speaking the good news that will lead people to salvation, and to his healing love, and to the deep and lasting peace that only he can provide.

In other words, we all have a vocation that brings joy to others. The world becomes a better place because we are apostles of joy.

In Matt. 4:18-22, we see Jesus calling people into apostleship. Saint Andrew was the first Apostle (see John 1:40-42), and although he would later lead many others to Christ, the first person he evangelized was his brother, Simon (who became Peter our first pope). Can you see the joy he shared with his brother?

The most difficult people to evangelize are usually our own family members. We're too close. We care so much about them that we're too hard on them. And since they knew us before our conversion, we don't have much credibility.

Apostleship means being sent forth to do whatever God calls us and gifts us to do. Romans 10:9-18 describes the need: The message must go out! And it describes our importance: How beautiful are the feet of those who carry the good news to others!

It starts in the home. We could be the best evangelizers in the world or the best at what we're gifted to do, but if we can't bring Jesus to our families, something's wrong. Our priorities are out of order or we're a bad example of what it means to be Christian.

In other words, when the people who are closest to us don't see our beautiful feet, it's because they're distracted by our voices that sound like nagging or condemnation.

Being good apostles and terrific evangelizers does not mean that we're going to be successful at changing the hearts and minds of family members. "Not everyone has heeded the good news." But it's at home where we learn to love others unconditionally. It's at home where we become good at forgiving. And it's at home where we're tested and strengthened in serving others with joy.

Forming our vocation of joy in the home is more about what we do than what we say. How do we imitate Jesus when you're with family? Consider every interaction as an opportunity for them to meet Jesus, even if they stubbornly refuse to recognize him in you.

They already know that you follow Christ and go to Mass and believe that participation in church community is important. You don't need to remind them. Simply concentrate on bringing more joy into the relationships. If you're a good reflection of Christ, eventually, this WILL make a difference. Maybe not as fast as you'd like, but this hardship will help you grow even more fully into the image of Christ.

My joy today is based on: