

***“Rejoice in the Lord always;
again I say, rejoice!
The Lord is near.”
Philippians 4:4-5***

Merry Christmas everyone!

As I key this Christmas letter, I am reminded of the Opening Antiphon of Gaudete Sunday (3rd Sunday of Advent), *“Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say, rejoice! The Lord is near.”* The call to be joyful and celebrate the Lord, is ours to embrace not only on Christmas day or during the Christmas season, but throughout the year and our entire lives. We have spent the season of Advent in spiritual preparation for the celebration of the incarnation of our salvation: Christmas - the birth of Jesus our savior and redeemer! As Christians we never let go of knowing the presence of Christ in our lives. We may often feel overwhelmed with the events of everyday life and question His presence, but when we calm ourselves we are reminded that we are never abandoned. Christ is always with us. We experience the presence of Christ when we receive the holy eucharist, when we spend time before the blessed sacrament, in our relationships, in our work, our acts of charity and the list goes on and on. We, therefore heed the invitation of the antiphon to *‘rejoice in the Lord’!*

In James 5:7-10, we hear of ‘waiting with patience’, as a farmer waits his harvest. We continue to wait as an ‘advent people’. Waiting for the Lord in His second coming. Although the excitement of Christmas parties, gathering with family and friends and the anticipation of Christmas morning can sometimes override our consciousness of waiting for the Lord, we should never lose sight of our true identity. As the people of Israel waited for the Messiah, the Virgin Mary waited for the birth of her Son, Elizabeth, in her old age, waited for what must have seemed like forever to become pregnant, we too wait.

We hold fast to the joy of Christmas joy as we continue our waiting. It is with comply joy and confidence that we wait for the manifestation of His promise. That He will come again to take us with Him into His glory. With faith and hope in the resurrection, we *rejoice in the Lord always!*

May the joy of Christmas not be short lived, but remain with each of you throughout our lives.

***May the blessings of Christmas
bring you lasting peace, joy
and goodwill throughout the coming year.
May this season fill your heart with gratitude
and your days with moments of wonder and hope.***

***Merry Christmas,
Bishop Alan Campeau***