



Office of the Bishop

DIOCESE OF SAINT JOHN

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Dear faithful,

A new liturgical year is upon us, which begins with the season of Advent. Advent, which means “coming”, is a season of preparation for Christmas. We sense the urgency of the prophet Isaiah, “A voice cries out: ‘In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God’.” (Isaiah 40:3) We remember Christ’s first coming over 2000 years ago, but we also look forward with joyful expectation to Jesus’ second coming at the end of time.

We may find it difficult to be joyfully expectant amidst such great uncertainty. The realities of the pandemic have added stress and often emotional anguish to many among us, particularly those on the front lines, and those who may feel isolated. Jesus does not turn a blind eye to our suffering; he calls us to draw near to him so that we can experience his peace in our trials. We must be ready and willing to tend to the needs of others as we are able as apostles of mercy, and accompany each other during this time of pandemic, never forgetting those most in need.

Christ’s promise of joyful hope is for us. When we make room in our hearts for Jesus, especially through prayer and the sacraments – privileged encounters with Christ - he fills us not just with a happy demeanor, but a true joy that wells from within. Christian joy is an enduring presence of the heart that increases as we move closer to God and remains with us, even in the midst of intense sufferings. As we prioritize our spiritual life and make a renewed commitment to personal and family prayer, our joy will increase and we will be able to share it with others. In this time of great darkness, there is no greater contribution we can make to society than to bear the light of Christ as his missionary disciples.

“Advent, therefore, is the time to prepare ourselves for this Prince of Peace by being at peace with ourselves, our soul, that is often in anxiety, anguish and without hope. For this, one needs to start with oneself.” (Pope Francis Homily, December 4, 2018) Let us draw near to Jesus with longing hearts knowing he is the saviour we have been waiting for, and eagerly awaiting his second coming in glory. Let us give God permission to use us powerfully to reflect the light of Christ to others, as we echo the words of St. Paul, “Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!” (Phil 4:4)

With the assurance of my prayers for you and your families, I remain

Sincerely yours in Jesus with Mary,

✠ Christian Riesbeck, CC
Bishop of Saint John

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