

## Advent-Christmas Message from Our Chaplain, December, 2019

The season of Advent for the non-Christian is really a non-event. During that time, perhaps, when thoughts of Christmas dominate not only the air waves but all the other various forms of communication media, one is caught in the hopelessness of ongoing gift-shopping for unclear and even forgotten reasons -- just because "everybody else is doing it." The real reason for the season is lost in the insignificance of a mindless quest for something for someone for some reason that's not quite clear. All that hustle and bustle for what????

But for the Christian, a main message of this Advent season of preparation for Christmas is that *God had not forgotten his people*. The prophet Isaiah tells the people that no longer shall they be "forsaken," no longer shall they be forgotten, no longer will their land be "desolate." Rather, God will call his people his "delight" and he will rejoice in them. These are the words that God wants us to hear sincerely. If we have felt forsaken, if we have felt forgotten, God tells us that we are not forsaken; He tells us that He has never forgotten us. He not only tells us this, but He has proven that He has not forgotten us by sending us a Savior, by sending His Son to live among us and to show us the way to salvation and to save us from our sins. That's why our fears are transformed into hope.

We can see this transformation in the person of Saint Joseph, who faced an uncertain future when it was discovered that Mary was with child before they lived together. His fears for the future even led him to consider ending his engagement to Mary. Yet, in the midst of his fears, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph and told him four words that would change everything, the same four words that were spoken to Mary in today's Gospel when the angel Gabriel announced that she would give birth to Jesus: "**DO NOT BE AFRAID!**" When those words were spoken to Mary and to Joseph, their fears were transformed into hope.

It became clear to Joseph that God had not forgotten him. A further sign would be given to him by the birth of a child by the Virgin Mary, and he was told that the name given to this child would be **Jesus**, because He would save His people from their sins. That is the meaning of the name Jesus: in Hebrew it means, "**God saves**." Christmas is the glorious reminder that God has been born into the world and that He came to save us -- from our fears and from our sins.

We have great confidence that no matter how challenging the circumstances may be or how dark the future may seem, "the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it," and the darkness will not overcome it. I hope you had a great Advent! May you and your loved ones also have a blessed Christmas! May it last well past December 26<sup>th</sup> -- into the New Year with wishes more significant than "Seasons Greetings" and "Happy Holidays."