

Christmas 2020

My dearest Brothers and Sisters in Christ!

Peace to your hearts, to your homes and to your families! SHALOM!

Let me “steal” the sentiments of a Christmas card that I received from St. Francis of Assisi Men’s Club just a few days ago:

WISHING YOU PEACE AT CHRISTMAS

**A Baby, a manger,
A bright, shining star,
A Shepherd, an Angel, three Kings from afar,
A Savior, a promise from Heaven above –
The story of Christmas is filled with God’s Love!**

**With every carol,
Every prayer,
And every celebration,
May you feel
GOD’S LOVE**

In a special way this Christmas!

We cannot dismiss the fact that we are in a pandemic – COVID-19 – has disrupted our lives in so many ways. Our hearts are heavy and burdened with stress, fear, anxiety and pain but... We can still rejoice and stare lovingly at the Babe in our manger and feel the warmth and the love of the Babe of Bethlehem! Yes, we can still rejoice! As we heard this past Gaudete Sunday, REJOICE IN THE LORD ALWAYS, AGAIN I SAY REJOICE! The Scriptures of Gaudete Sunday are powerful! We heard in the opening prayer: “Enable us, we pray, to attain the joys of so great a salvation and to celebrate them always with solemn worship and glad rejoicing.” From the Prophet Isaiah we heard: “I rejoice heartily in the Lord, in my God is the joy of my soul.” St. Paul in his letter to the Thessalonians tells us: “Brothers and Sisters: Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing in all circumstances give thanks, for this is the Will of God for you in Christ Jesus. May the God of peace make you perfectly holy and may you entirely- spirit, soul and body be preserved blameless for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The One Who calls you is faithful, and He will also accomplish it.” Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

For the past several funerals that I have conducted here at St. Francis of Assisi Parish, there is a hymn that has touched my heart and I would like to share the last 2 verses of this hymn which is entitled ALL IS WELL WITH MY SOUL.

Verse 3: My God is my safety, my glory, my strength; my refuge when life takes its toll.

I trust in my God, as I pour out my heart: All is well, all is well with my soul.

Verse 4: O God, I will bless you as long as I live; For your grace alone makes me whole.

With gladness and joy I will sing of your name; All is well, all is well with my soul.”

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***The Refrain says: After Verse 1 "It is well with my soul; It is well, it is well with my soul."
After Verses 2-4 "All is well with my soul; All is well, all is well with my soul."***

The subject title of the hymn is classified as: COMFORT. I personally find this hymn to be a consoling, comforting spiritual uplift. I sincerely hope that you find these verses as comforting as I have because that is part of my Christmas wish for you all.

Those of you who are braving the situation of COVID and are present for the celebration of Mass on the weekdays and the weekends, gives my heart great comfort and joy. I thank you for your continued presence. I cannot say enough to all of you who continue to give of your treasure by sending or dropping off your offertory envelopes – I am truly overwhelmed with your generosity. Thank you from the bottom of my Franciscan heart!

Your generosity for the St. Vincent de Paul Soup Kitchen, the Gabriel Project, the Cambria City Mission and the number of gift cards to Giant Eagle is outstanding! As our Patron Holy Father St. Francis reminds us in his Peace Prayer:" that it is in giving that we receive" certainly speaks volumes of your generosity to all of these projects. Again, I say thank you from the bottom of my Franciscan heart!

I cannot thank you enough volunteers for your work with our limited fish fries and gob-making. Your work has made our fish fries and gobs SIMPLY THE BEST! Again, I say thank you from the bottom of my Franciscan heart!

To each and every one of you my Parishioners, I extend my best wishes for a Blessed and Holy Christmas! To each and every one of you my Parishioners, I say thank you for making St. Francis of Assisi Parish a warm and friendly family! You are the best! Thank you from the bottom of my Franciscan heart!

I wish you all the joys and love of this Christmas 2020 and many blessings of good health, much happiness and profound holiness in the coming year 2021!

May the Lord bless you and keep you always lovingly in the Palm of His Hand!

With love and prayers,