

FROM THE PASTOR

My dear brothers and sisters,

Have you ever paid attention to the emotions you get when you think about going to Church? What are the thoughts that go through your head? For some it might be a dread for an hour that *has* to be given to God out of obligation, just to get to heaven (some would call this “fire insurance”). For others it may be “the thing you do” on Sundays – a cultural practice. Have you ever experienced a great JOY at the thought of going to Mass? For some of you the answer is yes, and for others the answer might be, “What? Are you crazy, Father?! Joy?!”

The Psalm this weekend says, “**Let all the earth cry out to God with joy.**” I think we sometimes forget the purpose of coming to Mass is to give worship to God, which then helps us become the best-version-of-ourselves, and so will give us JOY! We are called to cry out to God with joy for all the wonders He has done for us!

In the second reading today, Saint Peter says, “**Always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope.**” I think the reason we have, at times, become the “frozen chosen” and lost our joy is that we have lost our hope. When we look at the world – famine, war, oppression, disease, death, anger, etc. – we can despair and become despondent; we can begin to wonder whether God has abandoned His people. The truth is that God has not abandoned His people; He is with us still. He is the author of history. He has allowed evil to exist because He has a greater good in mind (free-will, which is the prerequisite for us to *love God*), and has a plan to make all things well (a plan which culminated with the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ). Do we realize that God is in control?

Too often we keep our eyes fixed on the darkness of the world. This, of course, will lead to discouragement. Jesus tells us, “Keep your eyes fixed on ME.” When we keep our eyes on Him, we will see that there may be evil in the world, but that God has a *great plan* to heal and repair all of the evil. This is our HOPE! Jesus has come to save us! His Resurrection has destroyed the powers of sin and death, and we have new life, and the promise of eternal life.

When we focus on this hope, how can we not be filled with JOY at coming to worship the God who makes all things new?!