

## *From My Rectory Window...*



Our Lady is often referred to as the “white dawn” which is the first peek of morning through the night’s darkness shortly after that “first peek” streaks of a radiant rose-like color appear which splashes across the sky as the curtain of the night gives way to the golden dawn. The two Sundays each year we use the color rose in the Liturgy are meant to remind us that we are on the very edge of the great feast we are preparing for. The addition of flowers and bright music combined with the rose-colored hangings and vestments testify to the crossing over to the end of the preparatory season of Advent (just as it does during Lent, just prior to the great days of Holy Week at the end of that season). Today is **“Gaudete” Sunday** which means to have a hearty sense of rejoicing not only for the Christmas Feast but more importantly for the great mystery of the Word of God taking on our human flesh in the womb of Our Immaculate Lady, namely the INCARNATION. We Catholics always revel in the great feasts and solemnities which point to this mystery as it tells us that quite literally “God is with us”. Remember St. John’s Gospel tells us that “the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us”. The ancient Fathers of the Church brought this idea further into focus by saying in a very Semitic way that: “He pitched His tent among us”. You will have noticed by now that unlike Lent, the hymns of Advent, are truly joyful and even dance-like, as the corporate Church community attempts to “hold back until Christmas”, but has a hard time confining itself. One of them is a great favorite of mine: “O come Divine Messiah” the melody of this hymn is based on an ancient French dance tune which seems to successfully incorporate the sense of waiting (even though we can hardly wait) with a sense of joy that Christmas is coming. Christmas of course does not begin until the evening of the 24<sup>th</sup> when that night sky begins to fall and the first stars begin to shine. Then we have a full twelve days to celebrate the fact that God has come to join us in the person of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Everyone loves to see newborn children, little tiny people totally dependent upon their parents and family. For whom we would “walk a million miles for one of their little smiles” (with apologies to Al Jolson). Little ones just affect us that way. So, we sing and dance (and surely feast) at the thought of the Lord becoming one of those precious ones for our sake and for our salvation. We have our Children’s Christmas pageant this Sunday afternoon and all things being equal, the *star* of our show will be one of the Parish new-born baby boys who will appropriately play the part of the infant Jesus (nothing like authenticity). I will tell you more about this next week on our “mini” fourth Sunday/Christmas Eve edition of the Parish bulletin. Just a reminder that next week there will be a different schedule for Sunday morning as the Saturday evening Masses are as usual. On Sunday Morning the 24<sup>th</sup> of December (the fourth Sunday of Advent) Masses will be celebrated at 8:00 A.M. and 10:00 A.M. ONLY. There is NO 12:00 Noon Mass. The Masses for Christmas Eve are at 4:00 P.M. with special Music, and our “Great Solemn Mass” at 7:00 P.M. (Candlelight Service with combined choirs and brass ensemble). Just for the sake of clarity: ***there is No Mass at Midnight***. Christmas morning Monday December 25<sup>th</sup> Masses at 10:00 A.M. and 12:00 Noon. Hopefully the word has gotten out, but you never know who is going to show up at 11:30 P.M. expecting Mass. Please tell everyone you know. We had a wonderful appreciation dinner and celebration for our many volunteers on December 12<sup>th</sup> the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe. The food was wonderfully prepared by Ocean County Vocational Tech culinary school in conjunction with “Cuisine on the Green” and the musical interludes were performed by our very own Pat Magnacavello a very regular parishioner. Thanks to the committee of staff and volunteers with Sandy Drake in the lead in the Kitchen who set up our hall with care and an air of festivity. Thanks to our faithful volunteers who make our Parish activities just hum! The very extensive work continues on the heating and cooling system in the Parish center and auditorium. The work is more than half done. Work will also begin on the Chapel heating and cooling to the extent that we can repair and update it. Currently it’s either off or on, no in-between. The cost to completely replace it would be prohibitive at the moment. Thanks to those who continue to send in those sunny yellow envelopes, it’s really helping. Just as long as we can keep things reasonably comfortable for our very devoted daily Mass attendants and anyone who uses our Chapel. Christmas is coming fast, let us be ready with open hearts for Our Lord and for **each other**.

**Come Lord Jesus do not delay come into our hearts on Christmas Day.**

Your Pastor and servant: Father Pat Papalia