

My Dear St. Francis of Assisi Family,

In these challenging times, sadness and anger can easily overwhelm us. These emotions often intertwine, particularly during the holiday season when people face mounting pressures—rising costs of commodities, endless holiday preparations, and the overwhelming demands of both work and home life.

Yet, when tragedies strike, something remarkable happens: our personal grievances fade as our attention shifts to those who truly suffer. We begin to worry about children who have lost parents, the vulnerable elderly, and the sick. In these moments, our anger dissolves, giving way to compassion and concern for others. Through this transformation, love prevails and joy returns.

Joy—this is what we truly desire in our lives. However, genuine joy eludes us when we remain fixated on ourselves. Living in a cycle of complaints, regrets, and arguments only condemns us to perpetual sadness and anger.

This is why the Lord's challenge to us today is so crucial. God invites us to embrace joy instead of harboring anger and hate. He calls us to encounter this joy through His Son, Jesus Christ. As St. Paul reminds us in his letter to the Philippians: "***Rejoice in the Lord always... for the Lord is near!***"

How does this joy manifest? It begins when we open our hearts to the Lord. When we welcome Jesus into our lives, we receive His joy and naturally extend our hearts to others. Turning away from selfishness becomes easier, as does helping and serving others. Let us allow Jesus to heal and liberate us so we can truly love. Then joy will flood our hearts, transforming not only our lives but the lives of those around us.

Advent blessings,
Fr. Vincent