

There is good news in today's word. God **wants** us to rejoice!

Let all the Earth cry out with joy!

My friends - it has been God's purpose - since Adam and Eve first disobeyed his law, to get people to see that a **different kind** of life is available to them; and that the life that He offers to all who believe in him and follow him is **rich and full and good**.

Our first reading is so beautiful in describing this life of joy and the promise of God to provide for that same joy:

“As nurslings, you shall be carried in her arms, and fondled in her lap; as a mother comforts her child, so will I comfort you;”

This striking image suggests a privileged intimacy, an amazing and wondrous dependency, even a child's first ecstasy. Have you ever seen a nursing babe, arms outstretched and lost in pure bliss? Is that what Isaiah is trying to tell us about God? Is that how God is to us?

Is this how we see God?

If the God we worship is imaged here in a mother's love, how could we ever fear peril? As sheep among wolves, what have we to be afraid of? How could our deepest heart's desires **not** be

met? Even in the midst of threats or most painful losses, we need not worry. The love that holds us close is the final act.

And that love goes on into eternity -

Rejoice! Not in your power over demons or addictions or sin, **which indeed you do** have when you have faith in God, but rejoice **rather** that your name is written in heaven.

Rejoice - that through Christ your sins are forgiven and you are called to repentance and new, radical life in Him who redeemed us.

Rejoice in your salvation, bought at such an unimaginable cost, the price that Love Himself paid so that we might, in our limited human condition, glimpse at the love of God for us.

Since it is the cross of Christ that **reveals** God's undying bond with us, Paul can voice a fearless proclamation to the Galatians: "May I never boast of anything but the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Through it, the world has been crucified to me and I to the world."

He is utterly rooted in **faithful trust**, the blessed assurance in a God who bears and **nourishes** us, who wants only for our good and for our life to **flourish** for service in the Kingdom of God.

If we believe this of life, we find **peace** and **mercy** and **joy** like Paul who says: **“From now on, let no one make troubles for me; for I bear the marks of Jesus on my body.”**

Yet we all-too-often choose to remain troubled in our life’s journey.

We buy into the notion that every travel in life calls for some of our baggage. We believe the lie that we can go it alone. Our American dream feeds our search for the next biggest and best. We strive, we work hard, we do whatever it takes! For what? A nice car? A bigger house?

These things in and of themselves are not the problem. And we must admit that they can bring a certain feeling of joy, for awhile. Then the “new car smell” disappears and the smell of stale French fries appears. The house gets filled with more stuff that we went after for the temporal pleasures that can be had, and suddenly the house is small again.

I think we all forget at times whose we are and what we are here for – we forget that we are cared for and worry more about ourselves than about anything else.

We seem to forget that God - who knows our every need, carries us in the palm of his hand, and blesses all those who call upon his name and walk in his path.

(Pause)

To walk in His path: Jesus **commissions** us all - as he commissioned the disciples in today's gospel reading to go forth and proclaim the peace love and mercy of God to every place that we enter - to bless those we meet - and to heal those who are around us and to proclaim to all that the Kingdom of God is near to them.

Jesus instructed these disciples to take nothing with them when they go to do the works of God - no hat or coat, no purse or sandals - no item that a person may trust in - but rather to go with only his word as their tools and his presence as their protection.

There are people everywhere looking for hope, people everywhere who need the **healing** that the **word we bear, having heard it here in the community of faith and His presence with us, in the Eucharist we carry in our souls** can provide them.

To proclaim the Kingdom of God for the love of God and neighbor is our commission, to trust in Him who commissions us is our sustenance.

We are sent by rising to the challenges of the Gospel. We are sent by our God-given vocations. We are sent at the end of each

Mass when we are told to go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

We are all sent to be harvesters of souls, each of us in our own way. But that can only happen when we can be honest with ourselves and with God. Honest enough to rely on His love and mercy, honest enough to trust in the total giving of Himself for our redemption. Honest enough to let go of all the baggage we carry.

So I wonder. ..Who will truly be the harvester of the fruit of our redemption in Christ; a redemption of peace, love and mercy?

Will it be the likes of so many who place their trust in themselves, who rely more on what we can get for ourselves than on what we **already have** in Jesus?

Or will it be a traveler so light and unburdened that all around imagine nothing more wondrous than to rely on than a God who would carry us and fondle us?

“As a mother comforts her child, so I will comfort you.”