

GAUDETE

*My soul glorifies the Lord,
My spirit rejoices in God, my Saviour.*

Rejoice! We have much to thank God for. In this Christmas season, the time we celebrate the birth of our Saviour: Our Lord and our God, we know that God is with us. By his birth through the virgin Mary, He became one with us. Unfortunately, there are many who do not know or understand the true meaning of Christmas. Our society is becoming more and more secular. The advertisers start promoting their Christmas wares in September with fairy tales and silly animations with little or no mention of the birth of our redeemer.

Last year, 2023, was been a very difficult and challenging one. The war in Ukraine is still raging with little sign of it coming to an end. Its capital Kyiv and other eastern cities have become bomb sites and the people of Ukraine and Russia are suffering. In the Middle East, Israel and Palestine are at war and thousands of people, including innocent children and babies are dying. In Europe, criminal gangs are becoming rich by taking advantage of people who are trying to escape terror in their own country and fleeing to countries where they hope to be safe and able to build better lives. Men, women and children are risking their lives to do so. Many are dying. In our own streets, knife crime is increasing and children are killing children. Our planet is retaliating against the way we have abused it. Climate change is creating havoc in every part of the world yet world leaders who come together to debate the problems do little or nothing to resolve them. They put their own personal and national interests before others. They fail to see the urgency of working together and making personal sacrifices to bring about a better world.

Saint Paul tells us, "Be happy at all times, pray constantly; and for all things give thanks to God, because that is what God expects you to do in Christ Jesus." (5:16 Thessalonians). I know that I can do little to influence World affairs but I can try to have a positive influence in my own little world. To those who do not believe in God, I cannot prove his existence but nor can they prove his non-existence. I know that God is with us for I recognise little signs every day that he is watching over me. I can try to be kinder and more helpful to those around me and I can pray more often and more earnestly, and encourage those around me to do the same, that God will help us to bring about a better world; To bring an end to war, violence and hatred between nations: To help us feed the hungry, heal the sick the, shelter the homeless and protect the vulnerable.

Lord, when I hear of bomb blasts that kill so many, of the destruction of whole villages, of ethnic cleansing, of collateral damage that accepts as inevitable the deaths of so many innocent women and children, I fear for the world.

Lord, let your peace abide, may your spirit of love and forgiveness help our world to become a better place for everyone. Amen. (The Prayer Trust) Taken from a beautiful Christmas card I received from Fr. Jim