

Rejoice, and Again I say Rejoice (Philippians 4:4)
A Note from the Missional Leadership Team
by Rolando Sosa Granados

Greetings to our beloved brothers and sisters in Indiana and Michigan Conference. Greetings from our beloved Savior and Lord Jesus Christ, in whom we have the promises of a better world, and from your servants in the Ministerial Leadership Team (MLT).

It is not a surprise for any of us that we are in the height of the Christmas season. We find ourselves making all kind of preparation to celebrate with family and friends. Many of us are playing and/or singing Christmas carols, some sacred ones and some other not so sacred but still meaningful and fun, like It's The Most Wonderful Time of The Year. Andy Williams reminds his listeners that Christmas is not only the most wonderful time of the year but also the happiest seasons of all. With a contagious melody and his beautiful and magical voice, Williams invites his listener to be of good cheer. The singer asserts his listeners that there will be parties for hosting and marshmallows for toasting and caroling out in the snow...

But how could we be of good cheer when there is so much suffering in our midst and in our world? How could I rejoice when in our own country we are divided into partisan politics and nativism which has led us to grow into an intolerant society and see our neighbor, not as our fellow human being, my brother /my sister, but as my enemy? How could I be of good cheer when my brothers and sister in Ukraine are suffering, and Christmas seems to vanish from the mind of the innocent child that only wishes that Saint Nick will not forget to visit his/her home? I wonder if the Ukrainian children this year would trade their toys and cookies in exchange for peace to come to their land... I bet they would. How could I celebrate and be of good cheer when a prolonged pandemic—COVID—and uncertainties in the economy cause me to be anxious?

How could I be of good cheer...? Can I be of good cheer...? A resounding yes!

Not necessarily because of the reasons that Williams sings about in his wonderful piece, but because Gaudete! Yes, Gaudete! The third Sunday of Advent. Gaudete is the Latin word for our English word Rejoice! It is a Christmas carol, from the 16th Century which exalts Christ the Lord (see lyrics after the letter). After all, we can rejoice and be of good cheer, as Williams invites his listener. We can rejoice because the Virgin conceived and gave birth to a Son and His name is Emanuel, God with us, in us and for us (Isaiah 7:14).

We can rejoice because the Lord Himself has promised that one day...

*²... the mountain of the LORD's temple
will be established as the highest of the mountains;
it will be exalted above the hills, and all nations will stream to it.*

*³ Many peoples will come and say,
"Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD,
to the temple of the God of Jacob.
He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths."*

*¹⁷The arrogance of man will be brought low and human pride humbled.
the Lord alone will be exalted in that day,
¹⁸ and the idols will totally disappear (Isaiah 2:2-3 & 17-18).*

We can rejoice, not because of mistletoe, but because, as we patiently wait for the Parousi, the Second Coming of our Messiah and Prince of Peace. We hold fast to the eschatological vision of Isaiah which once again reminds us that one day the whole earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord, and we will no longer train our young for war...

*He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples.
They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks.
Nation will not take up sword against nation,
nor will they train for war anymore. (Isaiah 2:4)*

Yes, our nation and our world are in pain, uncertainty and anxiety seems to be the daily bread for too many of God's children and creation; however, just like the prophet Isaiah spoke to the captives in Babylon, the prophet speaks to us in our perilous times to have hope and to rejoice. We bring our sorrows and fears before our gracious God and plead for his healing, but as the woman in labor patiently waits for the coming of her baby, so we must patiently wait for the manifestation of our Lord, the Parousia, the kingdom of heaven in which...

*⁶The wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child shall lead them.
⁷The cow will feed with the bear, their young shall lie down together; and the lion will eat straw like the ox. ⁸The infant will play near the cobra's den, and the young child will put its hand into viper's nest. ⁹They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea (Isaiah 11:6-9).*

Indeed, Christmas is the most wonderful time of the year: not because of the many parties we will attend, the delicious Christmas cookies that beloved family members will bake; not because the gifts that we will receive. Christmas is the most wonderful time of the year because of Christ, our Emanuel, God with us, in us and for us. Who has promise us that one day he will wipe our tears...

¹Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. ²And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them as their God; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; ⁴he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away" (Revelation 21:1-4).

Below are the lyrics to *Gaudete*, mentioned earlier in this letter.

Latin

Gaudete, Gaudete!

Christus est natus

Ex Maria virgine,

Gaudete!

Tempus adest gratiae

Hoc quod optabamus,

Carmina laetitiae

Devote reddamus.

Deus homo factus est

Natura mirante,

Mundus renovatus est

A Christo regnante.

Ergo nostra contio

Psallat iam in lustro;

Benedicat Domino:

Salus Regi nostro.

Natura mirante,

Mundus renovates est

A Christo reignante

English

Rejoice, Rejoice!

Christ is born

Of the Virgin Mary

Rejoice!

The time of grace has come

What we have wished for;

Song of joy

Let us give back faithfully.

God has become man,

With nature marveling,

The world has been renewed

By the reigning Christ.

Therefore, let us assembly

Now sing in brightness

Let it bless the Lord:

Greetings to our King.

With nature marveling

The world has been renewed

By the reigning Christ