

# Merry Christmas!

December 25, 2017

Last Christmas I was so lost in preparing for my new work as Jesuit assistant to the law school dean that I did not send out any Christmas messages. In fact, I now have to look into old files to find my Christmas email list.

It has been a difficult year. I have been successful at everything I have done because there was always a job description, a mission statement, a supervisor or peers whom I could consult. But being the Catholic mission and identity officer for the law school is unique in Jesuit universities. I have struggled, but now I have begun to get my feet on the ground, knowing what I might be able to do. In the end, it is God's work, and I have to rely on God's inspiration and help.

This Sunday's second reading calls on us to "Rejoice always!" Paul was writing to a confused community which was experiencing many conflicting practices and ideas as they approached the imminent coming of the Messiah to judge the world.

His "Rejoice!" applies to us, who live in very confused and conflicted times. In our world we are conflicted about the solutions to terrorism, nuclear armaments, immigration, refugees. In our country we are conflicted in our politics, in our economics, even in our styles of discourse about any issue. In our Church we are conflicted about sacramental access for the remarried, about the lack of priests, about the neuralgic issues which keep plaguing our bishops. And many of us have such anger that it is difficult to communicate with those who disagree.

And to us Paul says, "Rejoice!" God is nigh, immanent, at work in our world, as well as he was in the world of Jesus and of St. Paul. At Christmas we remember that God's becoming part of our history is a permanent thing---he is still present through His Holy Spirit and in the Body and Blood we receive in the Eucharist. He is present in our triumphs, but we turn to him more in our distress. Our hope in Jesus' way to peace grows as our human ability to achieve it grows dimmer. We need to turn to him, big time!

Rejoice! In Christ,  
Fr. John