

12-13-15

### **Pastoral Prayer**

Mindful of your love, may we heed the call of John the Baptist, and in so doing find the fulfillment of peace and joy you intend for us. Watch over your church, that we come to our Christmas celebration as a prepared people. Give us boldness, like John, to proclaim the need for repentance. Assure others of your love and give them the courage to ask for and to receive forgiveness. Release them from the heaviness of their burdens.

**Amen.**

### **Stewardship Thought**

Christmas is a season of joy. Augustine of Hippo caught the spirit when he exclaimed, “The Christian should be an alleluia from head to foot!”

Richard Foster explains: “Celebration is at the heart of the way of Christ. He entered the world on a high note of jubilation: ‘I bring you good news of great joy,’ cried the angel, ‘which shall come to all the people’ (Lk 2:10). He left the world bequeathing his joy to the disciples: ‘These things I have spoken to you that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full’ (Jn 15:11).

“Andre Trocme in *Jesus-Christ et la revolution non-violente* and later John Howard Yoder in *The Politics of Jesus* go to some length to demonstrate that Jesus began his public ministry by proclaiming the year of Jubilee (Lk 4:18, 19). The social implications of such a concept are profound. Equally penetrating is the realization that, as a result, we are called into a perpetual Jubilee of the Spirit. Such a radical, divinely enabled freedom from possessions and such a restructuring of social arrangements cannot help but bring celebration. When the poor receive the good news, when the captives are released, when the blind receive their sight, when the oppressed are liberated, who can withhold the shout of jubilee?” (Richard Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, Harper: San Francisco, 1988 rev. ed., p. 190.)

### **Offertory Sentence**

As we prepare the way for Jesus, let us open our hearts and hands in joy this day, offering all that we have and all that we do for the love of God. The morning offering will now be received.

### **Commissioning and Benediction**

As we go out, let us boldly resume our daily life and service knowing God is with us, imparting peace and joy that the world can neither give nor take away. The blessing of the Righteous God, the Redeeming Son, and the Holy Spirit is upon us. Amen.