

Pastoral Message for December 17, 2017
Third Sunday of Advent
“Gaudet Sunday”

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Baptism,



As we celebrate “**Gaudete Sunday**” (**REJOICE SUNDAY**) we are called to taste the Gospel of Joy that is so different from the temporary commercial happiness experienced by our consumer-captivated 21st Century. In keeping with this weekend’s liturgy there is a long and beautiful tradition where the people of Rome come to have the Pope bless the Baby Jesus figurines that the children and their families will put in their Christmas cribs. This year our Cathedral Basilica joyfully continues this wonderful sacramental custom of blessing the images of the Baby Jesus for our Christmas cribs. Celebrating this touching tradition, hopefully, will help each of us to better live out in our daily lives the reality of preparing our hearts, like the crib for the love of Christ Incarnate. This is what St. Francis did at Greccio when he recreated a live presentation of the nativity scene in order to call us all to put into practice the loving Eternal Word of God.

The blessing of the Baby Jesus figurines reminds us that the crib of our hearts and our homes should be places to care and nurture through sacrificial love for all the members of our family. This is not a love of material things but in knowing our loving Lord through the love of our parents, siblings, and relatives who sacrificially give themselves as a gift of love to us—a love that we should share with our family members, our neighbors, and the people of our world, especially the poor and suffering.

As we approach the Christmas crib of our home, Cathedral Basilica, churches, and communities; we remember that Our Lady and St. Joseph were not wealthy. Their first child was born in the midst of great hardship; yet they were full of deep joy because they loved each other in God’s love.

This is the miracle which brings true joy to our human hearts; it is knowing that each of us and our community is visited and filled with the mystery of God’s enduring love. Therefore, the Baby Jesus, who is central to our Christmas cribs, should be in reality the center of our lives and the heart of our world, “Love, begetting love!”

In this bulletin you will find our Christmas season schedule. I urge you to reach out to those in your family, friends, work colleagues and neighbors who have been away from the sacraments. Please please, please personally invite them to ***COME HOME TO OUR CATHOLIC CHURCH AND THE SACRAMENTS FOR CHRISTMAS!***

Advent love, joy and prayers,

Msgr. Jerry