Dear Parishioners,

How wonderful it is that Christmas is only one week away, and what a week it is going to be. School will be closed down, the stores will be open real late, and the Christmas parties will become even more plentiful. This is a time for us to be joyful. The big question is this: what is at the heart of our joy?

If we are filled with joy because of all the secular cheer our culture almost demands of us then it is rooted in an ancient tradition that predates the birth of Jesus the Christ. In the ancient Roman civilization late December was a time of wild revelry and great celebration. You see, after the fall equinox the astrologers noticed the days were getting shorter and shorter, the weather started getting colder and they believed the sun was very sick. However, around the time of December 21, the winter solstice, they started noticing the sun was staying up in the sky just a little bit longer each day. The sun was getting better. Warmer weather would come soon. So it was time to party – and boy did they party.

Everyone got into the celebration from the richest to the poorest of people. Streets would be filled with dancing and laughter, houses would be loaded with traditional foods and would be decorated with all kinds of bright colors. People exchanged gifts. Wine and other spirits would flow in great abundance – all this because the sun didn't die, the sun got better.

Does this sound familiar? Please know that I think it's wonderful that our culture celebrates Christmas, even if it is secular. We have a lot of good reason to be joyful during this time of year.

However, if our joy is rooted in our faith, our motivation for celebrating must be that Jesus the Christ the Son of God is in our midst. He is the light that reveals the Father's love for us. He is the light that warms our hearts with compassion and generosity. His light radiates even in the darkest of nights to bless our souls with mercy, comfort and peace. His light guides us to the Kingdom. This is why we are filled with joy. This is why we celebrate Christmas.

In joyful hope,

Fr. Tim Seigel