



*Weeping may linger for the night, but joy comes with the morning.  
Psalm 30.5b*

I know that in the ten months since we discovered the impact of the COVID-19 virus that weeping has taken front and center stage in so many of our families. Even for those who have not been infected and have not lost a loved one to COVID, there is reason for weeping. After all, we have all lost so much. Our very way of life has changed dramatically. I don't know what you are doing to cope. I hope and pray you are being safe and taking care of yourself and those you love.

This coming Sunday is the Third Sunday of Advent, a Sunday that is referred to as Gaudete Sunday. The word gaudete is a Latin word that means rejoice and is the first word of the introit to the Latin mass on that day. Remembering that in earlier times Advent was a penitential season during which praying, fasting and caring for the poor were the season's spiritual practices, church leaders declared that this Sunday would be a respite from the fast. Typically the Sunday was marked by swathing the church chancel in pink or rose as a symbol of joy. This Sunday, many churches, along with our New Church – Chiesa Nuova, UCC, will use pink to celebrate Gaudete Sunday.

Still, how does one rejoice in the midst of all that is happening in our communities, our nation and the world? I have been thinking a lot about that, and I have decided that perhaps we need another spiritual discipline for Advent: seeking that which brings us joy. I came to this realization while taking our children to school. As I drive through the neighborhoods I have discovered a strange phenomenon. It seems that there has been an infestation. Yes, an infestation of Christmas dragons. These blow up decorations are a large green and red dragon, complete with a Santa's hat and a candy cane in its mouth. There are even smaller versions, and one yard has a large and small one, a family of Christmas dragons! They even flap their wings!

Now, I will be the first to admit that in years past I have railed against people using Christmas decorations that don't really fit with Christmas. For example, the people who put Santa in a Noah's ark, or use the characters from the Wizard of Oz with Santa as the Great Oz, or so many other decorations that have nothing to do with the Biblical Christmas story or even the cultural story of the Christmas Eve visitation by Santa Claus. But as I see these Christmas dragons, I just have to smile. Sometimes I laugh and I find myself looking for them everywhere I go.

So, this year I've decided to get rid of my Christmas bah-humbug attitude and embrace the infestation of Christmas dragons. I am going to just let joy overwhelm me. I could do worse, right? You could, too. So, I invite you to join me in my spiritual discipline of seeking that which brings you joy. Perhaps you will then discover the truth of the promise of God sung by the Psalmist that, "weeping may linger for the night, but joy comes with the morning."

*Holy One, remind me in this season of darkness that joy comes, joy comes. Amen.*

