

**R: Let all the earth cry out to God with joy.**

Bless our God, you peoples,  
loudly sound his praise;  
He has given life to our souls,  
and has not let our feet slip.

Hear now, all you who fear God, while I declare  
what he has done for me.  
When I appealed to him in words,  
praise was on the tip of my tongue.

Blessed be God who refused me not  
my prayer or his kindness!

**Let all the earth cry out to God with joy!**

(From Psalm 66:8-9, 16-17, 20 – from Thursday's readings)

Faith, hope, love... and joy. Many of us have lately had the good fortune to practice faith in the face of many reasons not to have it, hope because we believe in hope even when there is little, or no hope, and love for others even when they do not love us back, because it is the number one commandment from our God, in His Trinity, love Him and love everybody else created in His image in likeness.

Now where does that leave joy?

More than a few people look at what has happened to some of us and wonder where all the bad luck came from – as in the troubles that beset many of us, whether they be health or financial or unexpected departures of our loved ones from here to There, or unexpected (or expected) departures of those we love as they separate themselves from us, perhaps because, bottom line, someone was too selfish or proud. Then there is the news. And I do not think I need to say any more about that. Of course the weather is at it (again) and its unbelievable dryness, not just here but in broad stretches of the Midwest, like Minnesota, Wisconsin and the Great Plains. Even the home isle, the Emerald Isle, Ireland, where rain is normally an often daily occurrence, is so dry it is beset by gorse fires burning hundreds of square miles (or as they prefer to call it - kilometers). Throw in a volcano or two, a rumbling earth and folks just must be thinking – now what is going on? Why us?

Where does that leave joy?

I stepped outside early this morning to check the garden. Another layer of fine light white lace, too intricate and tiny for its patterns to be seen with the naked eye, covered some of the plants, frost. I thought about the cherry blossoms and hoped it had not gotten too cold. But in the dry cold, there was sound. There were beautiful sounds. Birds sang in every kind of tune, melody, tone, pitch, way. They were so full of joy the very air itself was their symphony. The earth (and the birds of it) indeed was crying out with joy. Plants too, were doing their best. Now if the birds and the new life of plants can do it, with all the things they have to contend with, our weather included...

Why can't we?

Seriously... why can't we? I wake every morning with one thought on my mind before the thorns of the world begin poking me. I am grateful. I am so grateful for my life, that He gives me even one more day, for my dear beloved, my children and now grandchild, for who they are and how they treat each other and all they touch. I try and think of many things for which I am grateful.

And in that gratitude I find the seeds of joy.

It is not what we have or do not have in this world, it is the gift of who we are that matters, regardless of what it is – after all it is what we do with it that counts. We are His gift to each other and even to ourselves. And He, as it has been quoted before, does not give or make junk. Even if we mess it up, He always fixes it, if we open ourselves to His divine mercy.

Joy. It is all about how we not just feel about Him, but how we praise Him – and that also means how we do it for, and to, each other, all of us created in His image and likeness, regardless of the circumstances. It is His divine joy we embrace, and with that nothing else matters. After all, we are, most of all, a joyful, Easter people. So with the earth, rejoice!