

Blue Advent

You may be feeling like there is this immense darkness surrounding you as we move closer to Christmas Day.

Today is December 21st, the Winter Solstice, and the greatest period of darkness of the year. Today, we remember that even though it is the darkest day of the year, there is light for all of us, even if we don't feel that warmth or see that bright light of Christ right now in our lives.

WHY DON'T I FEEL THAT MERRY AND JOYFUL BEFORE CHRISTMAS?

There is an expectation of feeling merry and generous and part of the party. People compare their emotions to what they assume others are experiencing or what they're supposed to feel.

Stress:

The stress of the holidays trigger sadness and depression.

These stresses include:

- COVID isolating us from one another
- lack of money
- shopping decisions
- deadlines
- parties
- strained family relations
- pressures to please family and friends
- media bombardment

Loneliness:

While longing for company, lonely people may isolate themselves, making them feel even worse.

Loss of a Loved One:

The idea of experiencing happiness during the holidays might make you feel guilty or disrespectful to the memory of that person.

Nostalgia:

If your current life circumstances aren't the best, you may get stuck longing for the happier times in the past at the expense of the present

HOW DO I REMEDY THESE FEELINGS?

- It is important to not let expectations about how you should feel dictate how you actually feel.
- It is OK to feel sad and to acknowledge to yourself and to others that you feel sad, or that you miss your loved one.
 - Being respectful to those we've lost should include memories of good times together. A smile is just as loving as a tear.
- Give yourself credit for being as merry and happy as you can.
- Don't try and feel what you don't feel. You don't have to.
- Recognize all that you have, be grateful for all the little joys and moments of happiness in your life.
- REMEMBER – FEELINGS ARE FEELINGS – THEY ARE NOT FACTS.
 - You are entitled to feel what you do. How we deal with these feelings is what is important. But we must first recognize what we are feeling and why.
- We can't pray away these feelings, but we can bring our feelings to God through prayer.
- Remember the scripture story of Jesus and his disciples in the boat during a raging storm:
 - The storm is like all the feelings swirling around us, and we feel afraid and alone, like the apostles.
 - Jesus says: "I'm awake - and I always love and care for you. I will never leave you alone."

"Brothers and sister, cast all your cares and anxieties onto God, for God cares about us always!"