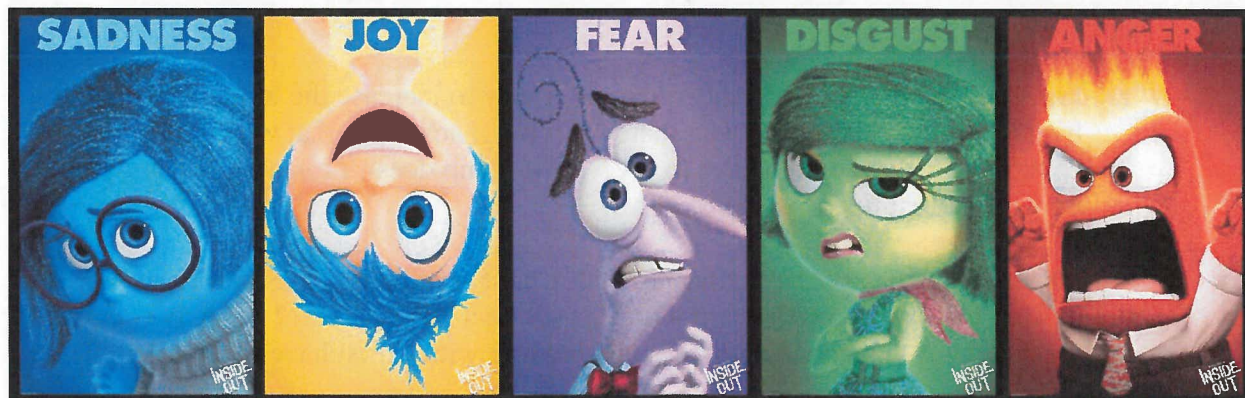


Look! It's Joy!

On Sunday we experienced our church's annual Christmas Music Celebration and were also blessed with a homily by Chris Tenpas on the theme of joy. For our conversation this week, let's dig deeper into the subject of joy.

1. Warm-up Question: What is your favorite Christmas song? Why is that song so special to you?
2. On Sunday, Chris referred to "post-modern joy." In our post-modern world, we're often tempted to seek joy in things like possessions and celebrity culture.
 - a. Marketers try to tell us to "give joy to get joy." In other words, joy is found in giving and receiving material things. Suppose you were to yield to the temptation to think that joy can be had from possessions. What would be the No. 1 thing on your wish list to receive this Christmas?
 - b. Chris showed a clip from the Pixar movie "Inside Out," which explores the four primary emotions experienced by a little girl named Riley. Those four emotions are: joy, sadness, anger, disgust, and fear, as pictured here:



- c. Which of the four negative emotions show above is most likely to steal your joy? In other words, which of the four negative emotions tends to be strongest in you? How do you think that negative emotion became so strong in you?
3. Chris invited us to consider what the Bible says about joy. Our Scripture reading was a medley of verses about joy. Let's read those verses again and consider what we can learn from each.

Psalm 47:1. "Clap your hands, all you peoples; shout to God with loud songs of *joy*." What do you hear this verse saying to you?

Ecclesiastes 9:7. "Go, eat your bread with *enjoyment*, your wine with a merry heart; for God has long ago approved what you do." What do you hear this verse saying to you?

James 1:2-3. “My brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of any kind, consider it nothing but *joy*, because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance.” What do you hear this verse saying to you?

Proverbs 12:20. “Deceit is in the mind of those who plan evil, but those who counsel peace have *joy*.” What do you hear this verse saying to you?

John 16:22. Jesus said, “So now you have pain; but I will see you again, and your hearts will *rejoice*, and no one will take your *joy* from you.”

Romans 12:15. “*Rejoice* with those who *rejoice*; weep with those who weep.” What do you hear this verse saying to you?

I Peter 1:8-9. “Although you have not seen Jesus, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and *rejoice* with an indescribable and glorious *joy*.” What do you hear this verse saying to you?

Which of the foregoing verses most speaks to you where you are right now – and why?

4. Let’s talk about some practical ways to better embrace the joy of Christmas and spread it across the year.
 - a. For some people, worship and singing is a way to increase the level of joy in our lives. Does worship affect you that way? If so, how does that work? What connection does worship have to joy? (If worship doesn’t affect you that way, why might that be for you?)
 - b. For many people, their relationship with Christ greatly increase their level of joy in life. Does your relationship with Christ affect you that way? If so, how does that work? What connection does relationship with Christ have to joy?
 - c. In seasons of great sorrow, what are some of the best ways to push through our grief to get back to a place of joy?
 - d. Chris shared several practical ideas that can help us:

Prayer	Journaling	Naming
Remembering	Keeping an empty chair	

Which of these ideas most speaks to you – and why?

Next Sunday is Christmas Eve and the next is New Year’s Eve! On both weekends, our two Sunday morning worship services will take place at their regular times. This coming Sunday we will focus on Christmas. The next Sunday, we will focus on the New Year. Keep your soul centered through worship during this holiday season!