

ICCH
International Catholic Community of Heidelberg

St. Michael's Church, Kirschgartenstr. 35, 69126 Heidelberg Südstadt
06221/13020 – office Fr. Christoph Heimpel

Today's readings: Is 61:1-2a, 10-11 | 1 Thes 5:16-24 | Jn 1:6-8, 19-28

Welcome Father John Edosomwan

December 14, 2014 – 3rd Sunday of Advent – Gaudete

THE LORD, OUR JOY!

Happiness is a demanding task, but it is a gift that God has willed for all men and women. The Christian is a cheerful person; rich or poor, sick or healthy, the Christian is always happy. He is happy because he has found the full meaning of life in Christ.

Joy is the one theme that characterizes our readings today. In the first reading, the prophet announces joy for all the broken-hearted. He exclaims: "I am full of joy in the Lord, my God." Great rejoicing because the Lord will bring to fulfilment His promises to His people. In the second reading, Paul commends: "Always be joyful." But where can we find this theme of joy in the Gospels?

The passage is centred on John the Baptist. Although, John did not appear a cheerful man because of his lifestyle: living alone, away from other people, and when he left the desert to be among people, it was certainly not to make funny jokes! He threatened everyone with impending punishment (Mt. 3:7-12). John was a severe ascetic, moved by a deep conviction of sin in the world. Yet he was also capable of rejoicing. When he presented himself as "the friend of the bridegroom", he said that having recognized the voice of the one who was to come, "he was filled with joy and his joy was complete" (Jn. 3:29). His joy was that he was able to run ahead to announce the coming messiah. That is the joy we feel when we are able to give the good news to others. The reward is unimaginable! It's like the little child rewarded with a trophy in a football competition for being a good spectator as chosen by the college.

If we wish to experience the joy of John the Baptist, then we must be willing to recognize the voice of the Bridegroom who comes to save us. But where can this voice be heard? How can we distinguish it from the many voices we hear daily?

The first part of the gospel tells us that the Baptist's task was "to bear witness to the light". We could stumble, fall and hurt when we walk in darkness. But we can move about safely in the light. Jesus is the light that has come to dispel the darkness of the world. Like John, we can recognize him when we pay attention to the "signs of the times." Let not our hearts be hardened by vices, nor our eyes blinded by passion, nor our ears deafened by stupid words and nonsensical gossips. Let us fill our hearts with the word of God.

John was not carried away or misled by rumours of him being the messiah. In his humility, he declared that he is neither the Christ, nor Elijah nor any other prophet. He declared himself as "a voice" that conveys the message. Of course, when the message has been conveyed, the message may remain but the voice disappears. What kind of "voice" are we in the community? Do we proclaim Christ or ourselves?

Christ is in our midst. Let us not allow our style of life and ways of thinking prevent us from recognizing him.

Father John Edosomwan

NEWS ...

CONFESSIONS – The Sacrament of Reconciliation is made available this Sunday (Dec 14) before mass. Come from 12:00 to experience and celebrate God's mercy and forgiveness.

ADVENT SOCIAL GATHERING – After mass, it is time for the last social gathering of this year. Please consider staying a while to get to know each other more while sharing food, time and the joy of Advent! If you can, bring a dish to share. Our social committee will also be very grateful for community members helping them with setting up (come half an hour before mass) and cleaning up after the social.

CHRISTMAS MASS – The mass on Christmas Day, Dec 25, has now be confirmed for our usual time of 1p.m.

If you would like to be added to our email list please send your contact information to:

infoheidelberg@internationalcatholiccommunity.com