

Pope Francis: Church is a house of Joy

Vatican City, Dec 15, 2013 - In his Angelus address on the third Sunday of Advent, Pope Francis emphasized the joy of the Christian message and community.

“The Christian message is called the ‘gospel,’ that is, ‘good news,’ an announcement of joy for all people; the Church is not a shelter for sad people, the Church is the house of joy!” he exclaimed to the crowds filling St. Peter’s Square on Dec. 15.

“Christian joy, like hope, has its foundation in the faithfulness of God, in the certainty that He always keeps his promises,” explained the pontiff.

The third Sunday of Advent is often referred to by its Latin name, Gaudete Sunday, which indicates that it is a day of ‘rejoicing.’

“In the liturgy, the invitation to rejoice, to arise, resounds repeatedly, because the Lord is near, Christmas is near. Like a mother, the Church encourages us to follow faithfully the spiritual path in order to celebrate the feast of Christmas with renewed exaltation.”

The enthusiasm of the crowd was apparent. Despite the rain, large numbers of people flocked to the Vatican square to celebrate an old Italian tradition: the blessing of the baby Jesus statues for manger scenes.

Today is “Bambinelli” Sunday, when children bring their statues of the infant Jesus from their nativity sets at home to be blessed by the Pope. “Dear children, when you pray in front of your manger scene, also remember me as I remember you,” asked Pope Francis.

“May the Virgin Mary help us to hasten our steps toward Bethlehem to meet the Child that is born for us, for the salvation and joy of all men,” he encouraged.

“The joy of the gospel is not just any joy,” the pontiff explained. “It is the joy that comes from knowing you are welcomed and loved by God.”

Because of its divine origin, “this joy truly remains even in suffering, because it is not superficial, but goes down to the depths of the person who commits himself to God and trusts in Him.”

“Those who have encountered Jesus along the road experience in their hearts a serenity and joy that nothing and no one can deprive them of,” Pope Francis emphasized.

“Our joy is Jesus, his faithful love is inexhaustible!” he exclaimed, taking a moment to stress the loving forgiveness of God, who is always waiting to welcome his children back.

Moreover, when a fellow Christian becomes sad, “we must pray for him, and make him feel the warmth of the community.”

Mary, the mother of Jesus, “helps us to live the joy of the Gospel in family, at work, in the parish and in every environment,” he commented.

The Holy Father described a Christian’s joy as “an intimate joy, with wonder and tenderness,” like that of “a mother when she looks at her newborn baby, and feels that it is a gift from God, a miracle for which there is only thanks!”



Called to Come out of Self-referentiality Yang

Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio, now Pope Francis, wrote to address the Cardinals during the pre-conclave Congregation meetings in which he used the term “self-referential” to diagnose the problem our Church is facing. What does “self-referential” mean?

According to the Pope, “when the Church does not come out of herself to evangelize, she becomes self-referential and gets sick. The evils have their root in self-referentiality and theological narcissism (self-love). When the Church is self-referential, she believes she has her own light; she ceases to be the mystery of light and gives way to that very serious evil -- spiritual worldliness. Put simply, there are two images of the Church: Church which evangelizes and comes out of herself and the worldly Church, living within herself, of herself, for herself. This should shed light on the possible changes and reforms which must be done for the salvation of souls.”

The Pope teaches us that “evangelizing pre-supposes a desire in the Church to come out of herself. The Church is called to come out of herself and to go to the peripheries: the mystery of sin, of pain, of injustice, of ignorance and indifference to religion....”

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Papa Francis’ diagnosis of the Church is also the admonition of self-referentiality to the body of Christ and it touched me. How many time I have fallen into self-absorption and self-love, drifting away from the Christ-centered spirit and other-centered service? For example, when I started evangelizing in the public venue I was enthusiastic and happy. Actually I was in love of myself and my initiatives. But when I noticed some people didn’t respond warmly to my preaching I lost my respect and became judgmental. It’s basically an I-versus-you scenario: I am handing Jesus’ words to you and why don’t you receive as I’ve expected? In retrospect I could see that I was standing there evangelizing but virtually I didn’t leave myself and my pride. What is this called? Self-referential, a sickness that gives one away to the spiritual worldliness.

Pope Francis teaches that the Church should be a servant Church which implies we the believers should be the servants of others, especially those in distress. The truth is that if we don’t even care for their pain and suffering, our evangelization is still a self-referential game.

Thinking in this light I changed my approach as in repentance my mentality of an evangelical worker is changing into a servant. Think for others first. Serve the poor in spirit as Jesus did. Now I truly enjoy serving people passing by our church before talking about faith or religion.

From the welcome desk outside our church I noticed that the passersby are weary even early in the Sunday morning: they are burdened, lonely and gloomy. “Good morning!” “How are you?” “Welcome to the neighborhood!” “Please come and see.” I greet them with joy, smile and cheerfulness. People need to be greeted. They deserve to be served with words and gestures of kindness, warmth and sincerity as if there are good people who care for their wellbeing. It is good to serve and understand people that we normally won’t encounter except in this event of evangelization. It is in serving that we keep ourselves Christ-centered, away from self-referential. It is in evangelization that we come out of ourselves to receive the joy and fragrance of the Gospel!

Vatican Radio Website:

http://en.radiovaticana.va/news/2013/03/27/bergoglio_s_intervention:_a_diagnosis_of_the_problems_in_the_church/en1-677269

福傳快訊

12月13年

教宗方濟各：教會不是悲傷者的避難所，而是喜樂的家庭

(梵蒂岡電台訊) 教宗方濟各 12 月 15 日將臨期第三主日在聖誕節臨近的喜樂氣氛中主持了三鐘經祈禱活動。他表示：“教會不是悲傷者的避難所”。教宗也問候了來到聖伯多祿廣場請求他降福他們的“小聖嬰”的兒童，並邀請信友為他們祈禱。

“喜樂主日”讓我們感到愉悅，“因為上主臨近了”。“基督的訊息”事實上是為萬民的“好消息”。教宗強調：“教會不是悲傷者的避難所，教會是喜樂的家庭！福音的喜樂不是普普通通的喜樂。因為我們知道自己被天主所接納，被天主所愛”，“祂來拯救我們，特別來拯救那些心靈迷失的人”。

教宗繼續說，天主的來臨“使我們變得強壯而堅定，給予我們勇氣，讓曠野和沙漠歡欣鼓舞、如花盛開”。曠野和沙漠就是我們干枯的生命。

“那麼，我們的生命何時會變得干枯呢？就在缺乏天主聖言及其聖愛的水時”。

關於我們的人性局限和心靈迷失，教宗勉勵說：

“在困難和自身軟弱面前，我們切不可有氣無力、搖搖欲墜。反之，我們受召堅固我們的雙手、穩住我們的膝蓋，鼓起勇氣，絕不害怕，因為天主始終彰顯祂的博大仁慈。藉着祂的幫助，我們永遠能重新開始。如何重新開始呢？有人會對我說：‘神父，我犯了許多罪，我是個大罪人，無法重新開始了！’。‘你錯了，你可以重新開始！為什麼？因為祂在等待你，祂在你身邊，祂愛你，祂是仁慈的，祂寬恕你，祂賜給你重新開始的力量！這對所有人都一樣！我們能夠再睜開眼睛，超越悲傷和哭泣，唱起新的歌曲”。

教宗接着說：“這種真正的喜樂在考驗和苦難中也存在。因為它不是膚淺的喜樂，而是深入一個全然信賴天主的人的心靈深處。那些在信仰旅途中會晤過耶穌的人，體嘗了心靈的安寧以及任何事、任何人都無法奪去的喜樂。因此，當一個基督徒變得悶悶不樂時意味着他遠離了耶穌。然而，

我們不應棄之不顧！我們應該為他祈禱，讓他感受到團體的溫暖”。

教宗然後呼求聖母幫助我們，讓我們在“家庭、工作、堂區和任何環境中，活出福音的喜樂”。他說：“這是一種由美妙和憐愛構成的內在的喜樂，好似一位母親看着自己剛出生的嬰兒時所體會的喜樂，這位母親覺得那是一項天主的恩賜，一個只能用感激來描述的奇跡！”

參加三鐘經祈禱活動的，還有許多請求教宗降福他們的“小聖嬰”的兒童。這些兒童懷着動人的目光望着教宗的窗戶，從教宗的話中感受到他的深切憐愛。教宗在誦念三鐘經後問候兒童說：“親愛的孩子們，當你們在自己的聖誕馬槽前祈禱時，你們要記得我，就像我記得你們一樣。謝謝你們，聖誕快樂！”



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今天福音裡的最後一句：「你們白白得的，也要白白分施。」（瑪10：8）

有人會覺得，能夠成爲今天的自己，是不是白白得來的：學位是勤奮讀回來的是努力賺取的，物業是慧眼投資的，家庭是愛心經營的，孩子是含辛茹苦養大的，辛苦得來的，怎能白白的分施？

我們往往只記著自己付出了多少才得到今天的所有，才成爲今天的自己，卻忘記了在「今天的自己」之前，「最初的自己」是白白得來的。

出生在這個繁榮的年代，是白白得來的白白得來的；寵我們的父母，是白白得來得來的；我們的生命，是白白得來的。

若果我出生在印度而不是香港，若果我身體有殘疾而不是健全，這個我，會是一個很不一樣的我。那麼，我的付出，還有什麼值得驕傲，我的所有，還有什麼不是白白得來的？

爲了白白得來的所有，除了感恩，還要分施，因爲「得來」，本是爲了「分施」。



Jesus is the reason for the season 耶誕降生，聖誕真諦

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