

11. 12. 69

10. 12. 70 (247) partly

14. 12. 72 "

13. 12. 73 "

I'm using as a signature this month

TAPE (Czech Advent) The words of that chant are in Czech, which I'm afraid I can't translate for you: but one reason it appeals to me (and I hope you don't dislike it) is its strong note of joy — it's a happy song, even if you don't know what the words are (it's about the fulfillment of the promises and prophecies of the O.T. in Christ). And joy is very much a Christian response to life, thanking God for all His good gifts to us — even this at times, as we all experience, He may seem to be very far away. Even repentance, the conversion John the Baptist preached, true sorrow for the sins by which we've turned away from God our Father have their share of joy, as one recognizes the loving mercy of God. And so has the longing of Advent-time, which is our Hope and optimism — joy because of the present and continuing presence of Christ with us, when we meet Him and greet Him today. Advent used to be more penitential in character than it is now, and some may regret the change — but perhaps one reason why a change of emphasis had to come was that joy had been largely forgotten in Christian piety. I know this sounds a bit of a paradox — but it's not the only paradox involved in living Christian life in this "in-between" period, of the pilgrim Church. There was, for example, <sup>more</sup> ~~more~~ to fasting, in the minds of the Christians who first started doing it, before any laws were made, than merely an ascetical exercise. And in case you may still think joy is something more properly reserved for Christmastime, there's this coming Sunday to remind you, now, that it's always time to rejoice. The third Sunday of Advent has long been called "Gaudete Sunday", from the first words of the Mass-texts for the day — St Paul's exhortation to "rejoice always in the Lord". Recent changes in the texts and choice of scripture readings haven't changed this.

The point is, there is, now, something to rejoice about, for anyone who has come to know God and the extent and depth of His love and care for us — for anyone who has heard and responded to Christ's invitation to share His life with Him.

One cannot, of course, just 'turn on' emotions at will, as one can switch on gay lights in a city at the touch of a button. <sup>or turn them off again as we've had to do recently.</sup> But a Christian always has, when he realizes it, a more profound and lasting cause for rejoicing than the s'times rather weak excuses we make for our more superficial forms of rejoicing. The superficial soon wears thin, and doesn't last very long, because there's nothing to sustain it. Celebration is a deep need of human life (it's always being done in one form or another) — we need to express ourselves. And that's why the most meaningful celebrations, for any of us, are those which do express s'thing that's important to us — it may be falling in love, getting married, having a baby, anything. Every Sunday is a Christian celebration-day, because it's the day of Our Lord's resurrection: but there are days we give thanks with greater attention and devotion, the main festivals of the year. People who see no need, or feel no urge to worship and celebrate usually don't see any point in it because they're not really involved in any cause for celebration — and that would be a poor thing to say of anyone who professes to know Christ, to be devoted to Him, valuing His friendship and love. How one celebrates this is, of course, another question — one of the important factors <sup>behind any true renewal of forms of public worship in the Church</sup> (which isn't always stressed in public discussion) behind the recent effort at renewal of the Church's liturgy. For liturgy is the Christian community celebrating together, and the problem is how to

For a little joy in music today,  
let's listen now to a Sunday Carol Christmas Song,  
"Every star shall sing a carol"  
Palmström's Alma Redemptoris Mater. [RHK-REF-E-1]

Gabrieli  
R.S.K.S.

do so in a meaningful way, together. For a prayer in music today, listen now to a joyful 16<sup>th</sup> century motet in honor of O. Lady - sancta et immaculata virginitas MUSIC: PRAYERS.

This week,

people in HK are supposed to be enjoying themselves during the HK Festival. There has, of course, been the usual scepticism about occasions such as these; but a more fundamental question has been perhaps - 'What's it all about?' It isn't enough just to have celebrations, amusements, excitement laid on for those of the population who have both the time and the means to avail of them. For very many people in HK, coming up to Christmas this year, there isn't very much to rejoice about, to celebrate. One wd. like to think that together with festival efforts, equal efforts are being made to give the less-privileged part of HK's population something which wd. be real cause for celebration. This raises a question about an unacknowledged problem in our community, the problem of leisure. It's not merely how much free time a person has, how many hours he's not working. You can't legislate leisure: yet it's a most important ingredient in true human development - and, in modern society, many people have never known real leisure, or how to use leisure time. In such a commercial, rather mercenary society as we have, it means a lack of full human growth - and this naturally affects the tempo of society, its outlook, the way we will worship and the way we will celebrate. It is a problem Christians should be involved in, and Advent wd. seem a good time to do so.