

18.12.67

13.12.71 (299
adopted)

P3116 Tape

"Rejoice..." [Phil. 4th] - Ep. 3rd Sund. - Advent
(Prayer Young Christians p184)

PRAYERS

For a piece of music this morning, I've chosen a meditation on an old French carol. It's an organ piece, of the French baroque period, about 250 years ago. It well expresses the joy of Christmas; let's listen to a little piece of it now, with the words of St. Paul in our minds and the thought of Christ's coming birthday. And let's think & pray for all those this Christmas who cannot, for one reason or another, share our happiness & joy.

Noëls français
pour Orgue

Another translation of St. Paul's message which I read for you before our prayers and which was the first scripture reading at yesterday's Mass, reads: 'Joy to you in the Lord at all times: once again I wish you joy.' It could be you or I writing our Christmas greetings ^{to friends} in these hectic days before the feast of Christmas. By the end of this week, the season of rejoicing will have begun: parties & dinners and what have you. Gaiety, happiness, friendliness will be in the air. And, let's pray, ^{real} joy too. For joy suggests something more deep and solid and lasting than the surface jollity and frivolity of much of what passes for the Christmas spirit. Joy is calm. It is unselfish & unselfconscious. It's peaceful and radiates peace. It doesn't need words to explain or communicate itself. Joy is what you can see on the face of a young bride kneeling at the altar, of an old man watching his grandchildren playing about, oblivious of him, in a convent of young nuns whose days are spent with the poor, the sick and the needy. Yes, I'm implying that, with all the festivities of Christmas, real joy may be missing. For so many people, it's just a holiday, a time to have a good time because that's what everybody else is doing. Why now, rather than last month or next month, doesn't really matter.

'Joy to you in the Lord at all times ... the Lord is near.'
St Paul wrote this from prison, when he'd no idea whether the door was

to open on his freedom or on his death. ^{The nearness} ~~the~~ ~~vision~~ of Christ, to himself & to those he loved, was all that mattered: this was for him the source of joy. ||

"There is one standing in your midst of whom you know nothing" was St John the Baptist's reply to his questioner who wanted to know if he was the Christ. The whole coming is the cause of our Christmas rejoicing, is already among us, our Emmanuel, God-with-us. He's also in our midst in a way, in which we too often fail to see Him. So taken up with remembering our friends, enjoying the good things of Christmastime, we fail to ~~see~~ notice the envious eyes and hungry faces of the ^{world's poor, underprivileged, deprived, depressed} begged children pressing their noses against the windows of our banquetting halls! Yes, Christ is among us in the hungry & lonely, those ~~to~~ who haven't got any of the good things of life we make such play of giving to our friends and neighbours at Christmas. They don't give presents, send Christmas cards, because for them it's a day and a season just like any other, a constant struggle to make ends meet. They are here in Hong Kong, and everywhere. The joy of Christ's coming is need for them too — it was they, those without hope, ^{to whom} He came to give comfort and the joyful good news. It was among the poor, people for whom there was no room in hotels, that he was to be found that first Christmas night. And His first visitors didn't

come in the contemporary equivalent of a family saloon car — they were poor shepherds. But they were, perhaps because of that fact, able to go away rejoicing.

Let us pray that the joy of Christ's coming may reach out more effectively this year to those in our community who have least of this world's comforts. For ourselves, let us ask Our Lord, not to be a scandal to them by any extravagance of ours, but to remember them and do whatever we can to bring His joy to them.