

HOMILY – CALL TO JOY – 13 DECEMBER 2015

There are many things that can prevent us from being joyful - there are many distractions in life. We put conditions on God or on others - we try and stack the system sometimes, so that we are not joyful – to go around glum, pre-occupied, and be a sourpuss?

Before writing his encyclical, which we have here in the Christmas Crib, – ‘Laudato Si’ - On Care for Our Common Home’ - Pope Francis wrote about ‘JOY’ in his teaching, ‘Joy of the Gospel’. Francis explored ‘Joy’ as it applied to the human family. Francis speaks about consumerism.

Consumerism - we can be so busy collecting and hoarding, without just taking time to be appreciative - to be a people of gratitude and to enjoy what we have.

Sometimes we put people down... you know, thinking or saying, "the only one who can do anything is me!" and people suffer because of it.

This Sunday the Good News is a ‘CALL to JOY.

I invite everyone wearing pink or rose to join our singers today as rose is the colour of the 3rd Sunday of Advent.

WHY? Because there is Joy in the Good News - like yesterday’s ‘Paris Agreement’ on Climate Change - a final agreement, where before, some countries have been so strong in their opposition. We acted as a human family. Fr Gerry indicates that the Paris Agreement is placed in the Christmas crib so that we can take to God in prayer.

What does it mean to be a human family and God to bless us with Joy?

We are in a season of celebration.

We have the baptismal certificates here, all ready for the baptisms after Mass - joyfully - to welcome Gracelle, Summer, Eloise, Miranda, Paityn and Michael who will be baptised and welcomed into our community, where we celebrate our faith.

Even in the questionnaire that we had two weeks ago - asking who is going to try and put what we suggested in place and in practice in the new year - 35 people in our community responded - on top of everything else they are doing – 35 people have actually put their name down to help bring it all together. We celebrate Good News!

The other night I received photographs from the opening of first Catholic University in Erbil, in northern Iraq. One of the photographs was of fireworks - to let all the people know around them that this is a joyful occasion and the fireworks were a symbol that they are together - not gunfire lighting up the sky - but fireworks in northern Iraq.

What are the things that we are going to celebrate?

Fr. Gerry shows us a small bag which he got at after Murri Ecumenical Christmas Service. He draws a parallel between the unique Aboriginal pattern on the bag and the fact that we, as people, also have a pattern to us, which others see when they look at us.

Are we loving? Are we joyful? Are we sarcastic? Are we doubtful? What are we?

On the outside of this bag there are three zippers – three pockets. In the small pocket at the bottom of the bag, you may keep a mobile phone there - in the top pocket, which is bigger, perhaps a tablet PC.

What are the things that we carry around with us - in life?

Are we FREE enough with whatever we carry with us TO BE JOYFUL?

Are we so weighed down by who we are that we lose the sense of joy?

So symbolising our photos or our technology or whatever is special to us, how LIGHT do we travel in joy?

Or how heavy are we CHAINED to what we cannot let go?

That is a pretty simple message in the joy of Jesus Christ.

There is another purpose, because sometimes we need to place the bag aside. We know that in the Gospel – the washing of the feet - Jesus takes off his outer garment so it is not in His way. And so we take off the bag with our meaning, our memories, our photographs, symbolising whoever we are and we place it beside us, so that we can concentrate on whoever's feet we are washing.

There are times when we just need to let go all our inhibitions – let everything go - so that we can be really present to someone, because that is what we want God to do for us – isn't it? We want God to be so present in our lives that God is concentrating on us in our journey. There are times when we need to let special things go -things with special meanings - to give attention to God in prayer or to give attention to someone else. We can let it go joyfully and pick it up again later in joy.

And Christmas is about Jesus being present in our lives, whether we are carry a bag of who we are or whether we are giving our full attention to someone else or to God

Whichever way we go, there is the JOY of JESUS CHRIST.

[Fr. Gerry Hefferan – Homily – Call to Joy – 13 December 2015]