

Andacht fuer den 21. Juni 2020 (Jenni Jones, Bournemouth)

This time last year the Kirchentag was taking place in Dortmund and I was one of the hundreds of thousands invited. Five extraordinary days packed with a mind-boggling variety of events and encounters. An enormous amount of work goes into planning for and putting on this summer festival, so that guests from (mainly) Germany and many other countries can bathe in the atmosphere of such a large gathering and explore their interests - whether religious, cultural, social or political. It can be overwhelming with so much stimulus and choice, and for those times the organisers provide areas where you can simply sit down in silence until you feel your energy return and you can start exploring again.

After five days of heightened activity comes the return to everyday life. I found last year that I returned to the same work and family and church situation I had left, but with a different, more positive and flexible attitude. Even now a year later I feel I am taking on challenges with strength and patience I gained at the Kirchentag. The current lockdown is more bearable because I can spend the extra time recalling happy memories and looking forward to the time when the social gatherings we are used to and which are good for our souls will be possible again.

Kirchentag is the biggest celebration I've ever been or am ever likely to be invited to. But wait, that's not true. What does it say in the Bible? Once a year in the church's calendar (and that's today) the theme of 'Invitation' comes around, when in the service we hear various readings from the Old and New Testaments reminding us of how our loving God offers hospitality at the table in his kingdom to **all** who will accept his promise of mercy and acceptance. One of these readings, Matthew 11 verse 28, seems to sum it all up where Jesus says: **“Come to me all you who are weary and carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest”**.

We can all identify with and say to that, “That includes me; I'm invited”, - after all who hasn't at one time or another felt overwhelmed by life's challenges, especially now in the middle of this pandemic. But Jesus is saying that along with little old me, absolutely everyone else that ever was, is, and ever will be is invited! What a crowd! Way beyond our imaginations in size and scope.

In today's prayer (see below) we mention some of those who are especially invited, individuals who sadly **only** know being weary and heavy-laden, praying that they will accept the invitation and experience the hope, courage, strength

and joy that faith in God offers, even in - or *especially in* – their unimaginably difficult circumstances.

With my head I can visualise and understand being one of many welcome “at table”, because I was brought up in a large family made up of many different characters. I can begin at least to understand the size and composition of “God’s kingdom” when I remember those mass open-air celebrations of Holy Communion at the Kirchentag, attended by folk from many nations, all sitting on the grass in a park stretching out as far as the eye can see and beyond. But the magnitude of the invitation God is continually offering when we look at verses such as Matthew 11 verse 28 – refreshment and rest for **all** comers - is so enormous that all I can do is stand awed and feel blessed that I am included.

A Christian’s conviction of being invited, included and blessed isn’t an end in itself though; it is an impulse that leads us to want **to invite and include others so that they might share the blessing too**. Perhaps the subject of a sermon on another occasion could be our role as inviters. As followers of Jesus we are called to share the good news of God’s love for all. When the risk of infection with the virus has gone away and we come together again after the lockdown we will, I’m sure, welcome each other with open arms. Our congregations’ services of worship are however open to all. Our prayer today reminds us that people in all sorts of circumstances may come in looking for refreshment and rest and that we have a role in supporting them in their search.

For now, let us hold in mind the simple image of a table with place settings that have no end ... Isn’t this at the heart of our celebration of Holy Communion? Let us put our trust in God, our host, believing that he will continue to bless us as we look forward to what he has planned for the good of our souls, for those whom we love and for all who seek him.

### **Jesus spricht:**

*“Kommt her zu mir, alle, die ihr muehselig und beladen seid; ich will euch erquicken”* (Matthaeus 11,28).

### **Wir beten:**

Du laedst uns ein, barmherziger Gott. Bei dir haben wir das Leben in der Fuelle. Bei dir enden die Sorgen. Bei dir ist die Angst vorbei. Du gibst und die

Welt atmet auf.

Wir bitten dich: Hoere unser Gebet.

Du laedst die Durstigen ein. Du laedst die Hungrigen ein. Bei dir haben sie Hoffnung auf Wasser, Brot, Milch und Honig. Bei dir haben sie Hoffnung auf Gerechtigkeit. Gib ihrer Hoffnung Kraft und erfuelle sie, damit die Hungrigen und Durstigen satt werden, damit es gerecht in der Welt zugeht.

Wir bitten dich: Hoere unser Gebet.

Du laedst die Fragenden ein. Du laedst die Suchenden ein. Bei dir finden sie Antworten. Bei dir finden sie ihren Weg. Antworte ihrem Fragen und Suchen, damit dein Wille sichtbar wird, damit wir alle zu dir umkehren.

Wir bitten dich: Hoere unser Gebet.

Du laedst die Liebenden ein. Du laedst die Traurigen ein. Du bist das Glueck. Du bist der Trost. Segne die Liebe. Lindere den Schmerz, damit die Kranken Heilung finden, damit die Traurenden weiterleben, damit sich die Verzweifelten aufrichte, damit wir einander Gutes tun.

Wir bitten dich: Hoere unser Gebet.

Du laedst alle Welt ein. Du laedst deine Kirche ein. Du gibst Frieden. Du gibst Einheit. Schuetze die Verfolgten, rette die Ertrinkenden, verteidige ihre Retter. Ermutige unsere Kinder, damit ihr Protest gehoert wird. Mache uns zu Boten des Friedens.

Wir bitten dich: Hoere unser Gebet.

Du laedst uns an deinen Tisch ein.

Dir vertrauen wir uns an und alle, die zu uns gehoeren an, durch Jesus Christus, unseren Herrn und Bruder.

**Amen**