

en

TAIZÉ
 2018

Four proposals for the year 2018

Inexhaustible Joy

A young woman who was very ill said to me last year, “I love life.” I remain deeply moved by the inner joy that filled her, in spite of the narrow limits imposed by her illness. I was touched not only by her words, but by the beautiful expression on her face.

And what can we say about the joy of children? Recently I saw some children in Africa whose presence, even in refugee camps where so many tragic stories are concentrated, makes life burst forth. Their energy transforms a mass of broken lives into a nursery full of promise. If they knew how much they help us to remain hopeful! Their happiness at being alive is a ray of light.

We would like to be enlightened by such examples as we undertake, throughout the year 2018, a reflection on *joy*, one of the three realities—with simplicity and mercy—that Brother Roger set at the heart of the life of our community at Taizé.



With one of my brothers I went to Juba and Rumbek, in SOUTH SUDAN, then to Khartoum, the capital of SUDAN, to better understand the situation of those two countries and to pray alongside women and men who are among the most afflicted people of our time.

We visited various churches and saw their work of teaching, of solidarity, of caring for the ill and the excluded. We were received in a camp for displaced persons, where many children stay who were lost by their parents in the course of tragic events.

I was particularly impressed by the women. The mothers, often very young, bear a large part of the suffering caused by violence. Many had to flee their homes in haste. And yet they remain at the service of life. Their courage and their hope are exceptional.

That visit has brought us still closer to the young refugees from Sudan whom we have been welcoming in Taizé over the last two years.

Before this, two other brothers and I were in EGYPT for a five-day young adult gathering at the Anafora Community, founded in 1999 by a Coptic Orthodox bishop. We spent time praying, getting to know one another and discovering the long and rich tradition of the Egyptian Church. One hundred young adults came from Europe, North America, Ethiopia, Lebanon, Algeria and Iraq; they were welcomed by a hundred young Copts from Cairo, Alexandria and Upper Egypt.

Our attention was drawn in particular to the heritage of the martyrs of the Coptic Church as well as to its monastic roots, which are a constant call to simplicity of life. My brothers and I were warmly welcomed by Pope Tawadros II, the head of the Coptic Orthodox Church.



On our return from Africa, we said to ourselves: people pay so little attention to the voice of those undergoing such grievous trials—whether they are far from us or nearby. It is as if their cry gets lost in the void. Hearing it through the media is not enough. How can we respond to it by our lives?

The following proposals, for the year 2018, are inspired in part by this question.

f. Alois

First proposal:

Dig deeper into the wellsprings of joy

This is what the Lord says: I have loved you with an everlasting love, and so I have continued to show you my affection. (Jeremiah 31:3)

The Lord your God is with you. He takes great delight in you; he will renew you with his love; he will sing with joy because of you. (Zephaniah 3:17)

Rejoice in the Lord always; I will say it again: rejoice! (Philippians 4:4)

Why is it that, every Saturday evening, the church at Taizé, illuminated by the small candles that everyone holds in their hand, takes on a festive air? It is because the resurrection of Christ is like a light at the heart of the Christian faith. It is a mysterious source of joy that our minds will never be able to comprehend fully. Drinking from this wellspring, we can “bear joy within us because we know that ultimately the resurrection will have the last word” (Olivier Clement, Orthodox theologian).

A joy which is not an inflated feeling, nor an individualistic happiness which would cut us off from others, but the serene assurance that life has meaning.

The joy of the Gospel comes from the confident trust that we are loved by God. Far from being a state of exaltation leading us to run away from the challenges of our day, it makes us more sensitive to the distress of others.

- Let us find our joy first of all in the certainty that we belong to God. A prayer left by a witness to Christ from the fifteenth century can support us in this: “My Lord and my God, take from me all that keeps me far from you. My Lord and my God, give me all that brings me closer to you. My Lord and my God, take me out of myself and give me completely to you” (Saint Nicholas of Flue).
- Our joy is nourished when we pray together in song. “Sing to Christ until you are joyful and serene,” Brother Roger proposed. Singing with others creates both a personal relationship with God and a communion among those who are gathered together. The beauty of the prayer space, of the liturgy and of the songs is a sign of resurrection. Praying together can awaken what the Christians of the East call “the joy of heaven on earth.”
- We can also discover reflections of God’s love in human joys awakened in us by poetry, music, artistic treasures, the beauty of God’s creation, the depth of a love, of a friendship....

Second proposal:

Hear the cry of the most vulnerable

Hear my prayer, Lord; let my cry come to you. Do not hide your face from me when I am in distress. (Psalm 102:2-3)

Jesus, filled with joy through the Holy Spirit, said: I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, this was your heart's desire. (Luke 10:21)

Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers for, in so doing, some have welcomed angels without realizing it. Remember those in prison as though you yourself were in prison with them. And remember those who are treated badly, as if you yourself were suffering. (Hebrews 13:2-3)

Why are so many people undergoing so many trials—exclusion, violence, hunger, sickness, natural disasters—and yet their voices hardly get a hearing?

They need support—with shelter, food, education, work, and medical care—but what is just as vital for them is friendship. Having to accept help can be humiliating. A relation of friendship touches hearts, the hearts of those in need as well as those who show solidarity.

Hearing the cry of someone who has been wounded, looking into their eyes, listening to or touching those who are suffering, an elderly person, someone who is ill, a prisoner, a homeless person, a migrant.... This personal encounter allows us to discover the dignity of the other and enables us to receive something from them, for even the most destitute have something to offer.

Do not the most vulnerable people make an irreplaceable contribution to the building up of a more fraternal society? They reveal our own vulnerability, and in this way help us become more human.

- We should never forget that, in becoming human, Christ Jesus was united to every human being. He is present in every person, especially those most forsaken (see Matthew 25:40). When we go towards those wounded by life, we come closer to Jesus, poor among the poor; they bring us into greater intimacy with him. “Do not be afraid to share in the trials of others, do not be afraid of suffering, for it is often in the depths of the abyss that a perfection of joy is given to us in communion with Jesus Christ” (Rule of Taizé).
- Through personal contacts we are led to find ways of helping the destitute, not expecting anything in return, but nonetheless attentive to receive from them whatever they wish to share with us. In this way we allow our hearts to widen and become more open.
- Our earth is also vulnerable. It is wounded more and more deeply by the ill-use that human beings make of it. We need to listen to the cry of the earth. We need to take care of it. We should seek, particularly by changing our way of life, to struggle against its progressive destruction.

Third proposal:

Share trials and joys

*Rejoice with those who are rejoicing; weep with those who are weeping.
(Romans 12:15)*

Happy those who mourn, for they will be comforted. (Matthew 5:4)

Do not grieve, for the joy of the Lord is your strength. (Nehemias 8:10)

After his resurrection, Jesus still bore the marks of the nails of his crucifixion (see John 20:24-29). The resurrection encompasses the suffering of the cross. For us who follow in his footsteps, joys and trials can coexist; they merge and become compassion.

Inner joy does not weaken solidarity with others; it nourishes it. It even impels us to cross borders to join those going through difficulties. It keeps alive in us the perseverance to remain faithful in committing our lives.

In privileged circles, where people are well fed, well educated, and well taken care of, joy is sometimes absent, as if some people were worn out and discouraged by the banality of their lives.

At times, paradoxically, the encounter with a destitute person communicates joy, perhaps only a spark of joy, but an authentic joy nonetheless.

- We always need to rekindle our desire for joy, which is so deeply rooted in us. Human beings are made for joy, not for gloom. And joy is not meant to be kept for oneself alone, but to be shared, to radiate outwards. After she received the message of the angel, Mary set out to visit her cousin Elizabeth and to sing with her (Luke 1:39-56).
- Like Jesus, who wept at the death of his friend Lazarus (John 11:35), let us dare to weep in the face of human distress. We can carry in our hearts those who are afflicted. By placing them in God's hands, we do not abandon them to the fatality of a blind and merciless fate; we entrust them to the compassion of God, who loves every human being.
- Remaining alongside those who suffer, and weeping with them, can give us the courage, in an attitude of healthy revolt, to denounce injustice, to reject what threatens or destroys life, or to try to transform an impasse.

Fourth proposal:

Among Christians, rejoice in the gifts of others

God made known to us the mystery of his will. It was what he had planned through Christ, to be put into effect when the times have reached their fulfillment: to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, Christ. (Ephesians 1:9-10)

How good and how pleasant it is for brothers and sisters to live together in unity! (Psalm 133:1)

God sent Christ into the world to gather into one the whole universe, all creation, to recapitulate all things in him. God sent him to bring humankind together into a single family: men and women, children and the elderly, people from all backgrounds, languages and cultures, and even opposing nations.

Many people long for Christians to be united so they no longer veil, by their divisions, the message of universal fellowship brought by Christ. Could not our unity as brothers and sisters be a kind of sign, a foretaste, of unity and peace among human beings?

- As Christians of different Churches, we should have the audacity to turn together towards Christ and, without waiting for our theologies to be completely in tune, to “put ourselves under the same roof.” Let us listen to the call of a Coptic Orthodox monk who wrote: “The very essence of the faith is Christ, whom no formulation can circumscribe. So it is necessary to begin our dialogue by welcoming Christ, who is one.... We must begin by living together the essence of the one faith, without waiting to reach agreement about the expression of its content. The essence of faith, which is Christ himself, is founded on love, on the gift of self.” (Father Matta el-Maskine, 1919–2006.)
- To enter at once into this process, we can begin by thanking God for the gifts of others. During his visit to Lund (Sweden) on the occasion of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, Pope Francis prayed, “Holy Spirit, enable us to recognize with joy the gifts that have come to the Church through the Reformation.” Inspired by this example, let us be attentive to recognize in others the values which God has placed in them and which we may be lacking. Can we try to receive their difference as an enrichment for us, even if it includes aspects that initially put us off? Can we find the freshness of a joy in the gifts of others?

Taizé 2018

Every week throughout the year

From one Sunday to the next, international meetings of young adults, to go to the wellsprings of the faith, to look for ways of hearing the cry of the most vulnerable members of our societies and to respond by our lives, to look for ways better to share the trials and joys of people nearby and far away.

Weekend of friendship between young Christians and Muslims (July)

From Thursday 5 to Sunday 8 July, a few days of friendship between young people of both religions to share about our relationship to God, the way we pray, to find words to express what unites us and what is different.

Week of reflection for those between 18 and 35 (August)

From Sunday 19 to Sunday 26 August: Praying together. Sharing on the Bible. Group reflection around the first of the Proposals for 2018: "Dig deeper into the wellsprings of joy." Workshops and round-table discussions with group leaders from Europe and elsewhere. Concerts and moments of celebration.

Lviv, Ukraine (April-May)

For the first time, a meeting will be organized by Taizé in Ukraine. It will take place from Friday April 27 to Tuesday May 1 in Lviv and will also be open to young people from other countries.

Kemerovo, Russia (May)

From May 14-19, with a few brothers and young people, Brother Alois will go to Moscow and then will take part in the Orthodox celebrations of the Ascension in Kemerovo, Siberia.

Hong Kong (August)

The seventh international young adult meeting in Asia will be held from Wednesday 8 to Sunday 12 August in Hong Kong. This stage in the pilgrimage of trust will bring together young adults from throughout Asia as well as from other continents; they will be welcomed by different Churches of the city.

Graz, Austria (October)

From Thursday 25 to Sunday 28 October, a regional meeting will take place in Austria, at Graz, with young adults from several countries of central Europe.

Madrid, Spain (December-January)

The 41st young adult European meeting will be held from December 28, 2018 to January 1, 2019 in Madrid, Spain.

Details about these different meetings:

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