

Christmas at the Swiss Church

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CHRISTMAS AT THE SWISS CHURCH.

Once again a large congregation composed of members from the Swiss colony met at Endell Street on Sunday afternoon the 24th December to attend a bi-lingual Christmas service. The burning candles of the Christmas tree lit up the church brightly and brought back to our minds the happy memories of celebrations in the homeland long ago.

Rev. M. Pradervand warmly welcomed the congregation. He quoted from a hearty Christmas and New Year message received from the Protestant Churches of Switzerland assuring the Swiss Churches abroad that in spirit they are with them.

After the opening hymn Rev. P. Rad read various prophetic passages from the Old Testament announcing the birth of our Lord centuries before it took place. Between these passages the choir sang Christmas hymns. A violin solo "Air by Purcel" followed, and then Rev. Rad delivered his address based on the angel's message as recorded in Luke 2.10: "Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people." Fear and distress, misery and death are everywhere, but Christ's coming brought heaven to earth. In the midst of this immense suffering we pass on the message of great joy, because Jesus Christ brought us the Word of God with which joy has always been associated. The prophet Jeremiah spoke: "Thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart," and the Psalmist said: "I rejoice at thy word, as one that findeth great spoil." But there is greater joy still, because Jesus Christ leads us to the Father. By His death He has delivered us from sin, as expressed in the well known Christmas hymn:

O du fröhliche, o du selige
Gnadenbringende Weihnachtszeit!
Christ ist erschienen, uns zu versöhnen,
Freue, freue dich, o Christenheit!

Rev. Pradervand also spoke on the theme of joy. He said that men were divided, and distinctions were drawn between nations, races and social standards, but the message of joy is for all who receive the Saviour in their hearts and homes. It is not only a message for to-day, but for all times. We may have had setbacks and failures, disappointments and sorrow, but to-day

God offers us comfort and strength. He wants us to live by His grace, which we find abundantly in the Lord Jesus Christ, if we let Him dwell and abide in us.

A Christmas Carol was sung by the members of the French Y.M.C.A. which was very much enjoyed by the congregation.

The celebration came to a close with the singing of a hymn which so well expresses the thought of the Lord's abiding presence, as the most wonderful experience in our life:

Reste avec nous, Seigneur, le jour décline,
La nuit s'approche et nous menace tous;
Nous implorons ta présence divine;
Reste avec nous, Seigneur, reste avec nous.

The service ended, the members of the congregation were given an opportunity to meet and greet each other over a cup of tea served with tasty cakes and cookies, which was much appreciated.

W.F.

CHRISTMAS PARTY OF SWISS CATHOLICS.

The Church Service at St. Peters, Palace Street, W.1, on New Year's eve was well attended and consisted of a short sermon by the Chaplain, Fr. Lanfranchi, followed by Solemn Benediction given by Fr. Wuerms.

The subsequent Christmas party at the Cathedral Hall was a great success. Nearly 500 compatriots and friends including about 80 children were present. Tea with a fine collection of cakes and pastries (gratuitously provided by our compatriots Messrs. Bachmann (Kencakes), Aubonney and Webber) was served free of charge; real good toys for all children, large and small were available. A large Christmas tree with candles alight and a crib, the Swiss flag prominently displayed gave a homely feeling to all.

The mixed choir under the direction of Mr. Hyde from the Westminster Cathedral rendered not only beautiful Christmas Carols but even a "Yoddler," the songs being appreciated by all.

A Swiss conjuror showed many tricks of his magic Madame Papacini gave 2 recitals of English and Italian songs and a group of 4 young Swiss girls gave fine yodelling accompanied on the accordion by Mr. Martin.

The presence of His Grace, the Archbishop of Westminster at the party was a great treat for all. He mixed with all, particularly the children. In a few well chosen words His Grace expressed pleasure in being amongst the Swiss, expressed the conviction that the coming year would see peace and enable most of those present to see their beloved homeland and their people who, he said, were doing such splendid humanitarian work through the International Red Cross. On leaving His Grace imparted his blessing.

The Swiss Minister, Dr. P. Ruegger who was present at the Church and at the party received a great ovation on rising to speak. He brought greetings from our homeland and equally expressed the wish that 1945 would bring about peace and happiness for all.

Both His Grace and the Swiss Minister gave thanks to the Chaplain Fr. Lanfranchi and the Committee for the great spiritual and patriotic work they are doing by uniting the Swiss Catholics and for the successful way the party had been arranged.

J.J.B.

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