

Die Freude als „Identität“ des Christen – Zur revolutionären Dimension von *Evangelii Gaudium*

Joy as “Identity” of Christians – On the Revolutionary Dimension of *Evangelii Gaudium*

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Abstract

The text argues that *Evangelii Gaudium*, the apostolic exhortation by Pope Francis, reflects upon the church from the perspective of its biblical origins. In the light of contemporary challenges such as urbanisation, loss of tradition, incorporeality and invulnerability in the virtual world and the subsequent search for identity, *Evangelii Gaudium* tries to search for a „Catholic“ identity. However, this identity does not persist in a delimiting self-assurance. By focusing on the festive joy as constitutive for the „identity“ of Christians, it undermines the typical search for an invariant identity. The „identity“ of the Christians as festive joy brings together three important categories that play a central role in the Bible. The first category is mercy which refers back to the gesture of God’s invitation to a universal festivity. The festivity figures the second category. The third category that the text introduces refers to the impoverished as they are the first ones who are invited to the festivity. This aspect relates to the Pope’s call to Christians to take up their way to the peripheries, to those who fall out of the centre of society and thereby undermine self-contained constructs of identity. The text shows that leaving behind secure concepts of identity leads Christians to a fragility and a form of compassion that reaches the inner core of their body, as though they receive a second skin representing the open body of Christ in order to enter a landscape of compassion. As *Evangelii Gaudium* takes up this biblical thought, it can be seen as a theological program in the name of the embodiment of Christ in our global society.

Keywords: *Evangelii Gaudium*, Christianity, Pope Francis, People of God, Body of Christ, Compassion, Resurrection, Holy Spirit