

Biskop Marianne Gaardens indsættelsestale for DSUK-præst Christa Lund Herum den 18. marts 2018, Christ Church, Bangkok, Thailand

Dear congregation, dear visitors, dear Church Council, dear pastoral colleges and dear Christa

I can imagine that all of you have been looking forward to this day here in Christ Church, Bangkok. Many of you have invested time and energy in the preparation for not only this day but for this day at all to come when the first Danish pastor is inserted to serve the Danish congregation here in Thailand.

While I was back in a cold Denmark preparing this speech, I listened to a radio program about being patriotic, which we in Danish we would call “fædrelandsfølelse”.

This patriotic feeling is primarily related to the Romantic period in beginning of the 1800 century. In this period, many of our well-known Danish patriotic songs were written.

A typical example is the famous national song written by the Danish fairytale writer and poet, Hans Christian Andersen. I guess he does not need any further presentation.

He wrote in 1850 the national song:

“In Denmark I’m born, that’s where I belong,
there I have my roots, from there my world goes”.

In Danish: ”I Danmark er jeg født, der har jeg hjemme,
Der har jeg rod, derfra min verden går.”

The main idea is that where we are born, that is where we belong. Our native country defines our identity.

We are bound to our native country and our identity is shaped by our native country. Or to put it another way:

Our identity is related to the feeling of belonging to.

The same day I was visiting the church council of a little Danish congregation in a rural area in the diocese of Lolland-Falster, where I am called to serve.

Like many other congregations in rural areas

they have to face many empty graves at the churchyard, because people leave the countryside and move to bigger cities – and they never come back.

People are now a day not bound to the place, where they were born. A huge demographic movement is taking place,

not only in Denmark, but worldwide. People leave their native village, hometown, home city and even their home country, they move to other places.

The place we are born is no longer necessarily the place where we belong. Our country no longer necessarily defines our identity, and we are no longer bound to our native country. Maybe we were born and grew up in Denmark, but later in our life we move to another country – Thailand for instance!

But then – what happens to our identity related to the feeling of belonging to, when we no longer live in our native country?

When we were baptized we were granted another identity.
As Christians we believe that we belong to God.
We all are the children of God, and
we all dwell in the love of God, and
Gods' love transcends human boarders and nationality.

Whether we are in Thailand, Denmark or Australia,
we are granted an identity as the children of God.
An identity which the worship service like the one we are celebrating right now supports. We are
together with different life stories but with the shared identity of being Christians.

We need to hear the good news Jesus told 2000 years ago.
We need to hear that we are the beloved children of God,
and need to hear that God is always nearby us where ever we are, even though we turn away from
God.
So, we need to hear the Gospel again and again and again.

So, it is such a wonderful and joyful day today,
where the Danish congregation here in Thailand in
the future can celebrate the worship service, hear the Gospel, sing, praise God, share the bread and
wine, in the church, maybe at the hospital or in prison.

Like Virgin Mary is the servant of God, so are you, Christa, called to preach the good news to the
Danish congregation hear in Bangkok, again, and again and again. To support the feeling of
belonging to God despite where in the world we are born. God bless you in your call.