

HOPE IN THE FUTURE

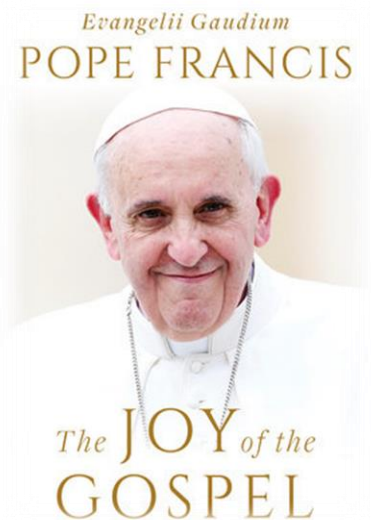


THE JOY OF THE GOSPEL

Opening Prayer

The first apostolic letter of Pope Francis was called “The Joy of the Gospel” reminding us all of the Churches primary mission, to evangelise in a modern world. We remember the first apostles, who filled with the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, went out to build the Church from nothing with no modern communication or transport, just the zeal to spread the Good News. We too are called to do the same, Jesus said “Just as the Father has sent me so I am sending you, go therefore make disciples of all nations”.

Are you responding to His call?



O God, whose will it is that all should be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth, look upon your abundant harvest and be pleased to send workers to gather it, that the Gospel may be preached to all creation and that your people, gathered by the word of life and sustained by the power of the Sacraments, may advance in the path of salvation and love. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

Amen

Scripture Reading – Matthew 5:13-16

“You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot.

“You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

The Word of the Lord
Thanks be to God

Jesus calls us to be salt and light to the world bringing flavour and light to a bland, dark world. Do we share our faith by placing it on a lamp stand for all to see or do we hide it under a bowl between Sundays? Pope Francis makes the point that evangelisation is not to be left to the “professionals” while the rest of us are passive recipients. Through baptism every Christian is challenged to be actively engaged in evangelisation, and there is a certain urgency about this calling.



As we offer ourselves in service to the Gospel let us pray for those who do not yet know the love of God asking the Holy Spirit to soften their hearts so we can work in them.

Commissioning of Missionary Disciples

Almighty God and loving Father, we come before you as a Christian community with these petitions inspired by the teaching of Pope Francis.

Leader: Let us not allow ourselves to be robbed of missionary enthusiasm!

All: We say yes to a missionary spirituality that shapes our way of life.

Leader: Let us not allow ourselves to be robbed of the joy of sharing the Good News!

All: We resist “the grey pragmatism of church life.” We ask the Lord to heal our inner weariness and fill us with zeal for the Good News.

Leader: Let us not allow ourselves to be robbed of hope!

All: We refuse to be prophets of doom, for we know that the Lord’s love is steadfast and the Holy Spirit radiates in the midst of darkness. Lord, strengthen our hope!

Leader: Let us not allow ourselves to be robbed of community!

All: We refuse to flee from the challenges of loving each other. Lord, help us not to become ‘closed in’ by the comfort of our privacy or our ‘inner circle’.

Leader: Let us not allow ourselves to be robbed of the Gospel!

All: We refuse the corruption of spiritual worldliness. Lord, send us forth to others: in community, in service, in reconciliation, and in a ‘revolution of tenderness.’

Leader: Let us not allow ourselves to be robbed of the ideal of fraternal love!

All: We embrace the law of love. Lord, help us to love, in spite of everything.

Leader: Let us not allow ourselves to be robbed of missionary vigour!

All: We trust in God’s love, even amidst suffering. Lord, help us to be realists, but without losing our joy, our boldness and our hope filled commitment to you and your people.

Mary, star of the new evangelisation. **Pray for us.**
St John the evangelist. **Pray for us.**

Loving Father,
You so loved the world that you sent us your only Son,
that we might believe in him and have eternal life.
May we encounter Jesus Christ anew this day
and live the Good News with joy.
Through the power of your Holy Spirit,
help us to “go out to the whole world and proclaim”
our faith with confidence.
Give us the courage to witness to the Joy of the Gospel
by our words and actions.
Amen.

20 suggestions to live the Joy of the Gospel

1. Hold or touch a cross, take a deep breath, and say ‘yes’ to living this day with hope.
2. Start and end each day with a prayer of praise.
3. Be grateful for a difficult challenge. How is the Lord teaching you?
4. Unburden your heart. Release a grudge you harbour. Deepen this healing by receiving the Sacrament of Reconciliation.
5. Pray for peace each time you receive the Eucharist, the sacrament of unity.
6. Take a walk in the park and allow God to speak to you through nature: sunshine, an evening breeze, the sounds of children playing.
7. Pray the rosary. But slow down your praying! Linger over the rich biblical imagery that the rosary leads you to contemplate.
8. Congratulate a newly baptised Christian.
9. Welcome God’s gift of life. Rejoice in a friend’s pregnancy.
10. Say thank you to those who work hard for your parish, for your local community, for your nation.
11. Break the gossip cycle. Let the nasty rumour stop with me. Or if you must gossip, start a positive (and truthful) rumour! In other words, spread joy not angst.
12. Take a joy-filled Scripture verse and ‘chew’ on it during the day.
13. Pray at the grave of a loved one. Reaffirm your belief in the gift of eternal life.
14. Ponder the miracle of new life. Gaze upon a new born baby. Let your contemplative gaze draw you into the heart of God.
15. Increase the ‘joy’ level at home. Be quick to praise and slow to criticise. Choose to be enthusiastic when you least feel like it.
16. Who is the most joyful person you know? Tell them. ‘Catch’ their joy, and spread it!
17. Take your pulse and ponder the gift of life pulsing through your body.
18. Be ready to respond to everyday opportunities to discuss matters of faith with non-believers and with believers of other faith traditions, perhaps in response to media stories or world events.
19. Invite Our Lady to be a special companion, sister, mother to you. With Mary, ponder a matter in your heart. It might be a situation of great disturbance, or an event of great happiness. Either way, the Lord is to be found in the depths of this suffering, this joy.
20. Turn off the TV or radio, close down your computer, iphone, ipad... and be more present to your family.

Do not allow yourself to be robbed of HOPE (#86)

Many of us left the Formation Days feeling encouraged but challenged. The secular world we live in and the structure of the Church can sometime be a challenge but we must not lose **HOPE**. In his document Pope Francis describes “a defeatism which turns us into querulous and disillusioned pessimists, “sourpusses” (#85). We must say no to a sterile pessimism. For the joy of the Gospel belongs to you; nothing and no one can take it from you. (#84)

The evils of our world — and those of the Church — must not be excuses for diminishing our commitment... Let us look upon them as challenges which can help us to grow. (#84)

Nobody can go off to battle unless he is fully convinced of victory beforehand. If we start without confidence, we have already lost half the battle and we bury our talents. While painfully aware of our frailties, we have to march on without giving in, keeping in mind what the Lord said to St Paul: ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness’ (2 Cor 12:9). (#85)

We need to work together with our various Charisms (#115)

Being a Christian in the Church doesn't make us immune from disagreements, envy and competition. We need to work together as a team in our parishes, our families and our communities. Pope Francis describes evangelisation in terms of joyfully acknowledging the varied treasures which the Holy Spirit pours out upon the Church, in cultural diversity and in many different charisms. Such variety of culture and charism, integrated into the whole ecclesial body, can renew and build up the Church. These are great treasures! (#115-118)

How many wars take place within the people of God. In our neighbourhoods and in the workplace, how many wars are caused by envy and jealousy, even among Christians! (#98)

Beware of the temptation of jealousy! We are all in the same boat and headed to the same port! Let us ask for the grace to rejoice in the gifts of each, which belong to all. (#99)

Do not allow yourself to be robbed of missionary vigour (#109)

Pope Francis describes the Church as a pilgrim people:

The Church...is more than an organic and hierarchical institution: she is first and foremost a people advancing on its pilgrim way towards God. She is certainly a mystery rooted in the Trinity, yet she exists concretely in history as a people of pilgrims and evangelisers, transcending any institutional expression, however necessary. (#111)

Salvation is always the free gift and initiative of God, “who loved us first” (1 John 4:19). It is never something we can earn or bring about by human effort alone. (#112)

Closing Prayer

Mary, Virgin and Mother,
you who, moved by the Holy Spirit,
welcomed the word of life
in the depths of your humble faith:
as you gave yourself completely to the Eternal One,
help us to say our own “yes”
to the urgent call, as pressing as ever,
to proclaim the good news of Jesus.

Filled with Christ’s presence,
you brought joy to John the Baptist,
making him exult in the womb of his mother.
Brimming over with joy,
you sang of the great things done by God.
Standing at the foot of the cross
with unyielding faith,
you received the joyful comfort of the resurrection,
and joined the disciples in awaiting the Spirit
so that the evangelizing Church might be born.

Obtain for us now a new ardour born of the resurrection,
that we may bring to all the Gospel of life
which triumphs over death.
Give us a holy courage to seek new paths,
that the gift of unfading beauty
may reach every man and woman.

Virgin of listening and contemplation,
Mother of love, Bride of the eternal wedding feast,
pray for the Church, whose pure icon you are,
that she may never be closed in on herself
or lose her passion for establishing God’s kingdom.

Star of the new evangelization,
help us to bear radiant witness to communion,
service, ardent and generous faith,
justice and love of the poor,
that the joy of the Gospel
may reach to the ends of the earth,
illuminating even the fringes of our world.

Mother of the living Gospel,
wellspring of happiness for God’s little ones,
pray for us.

Amen. Alleluia!

Pope Francis: Evangelii Gaudium, #288

