

Evangelii Gaudium Sunday

The Joy of the Gospel

A letter to the Church published by Pope Francis in November 2013 soon after he was elected Pope.

It draws heavily on ideas that he had lived by and promoted in his life as Archbishop of Buenos Aires before becoming Pope.

Through this apostolic exhortation, Pope Francis had publicly laid out what he wants to **focus** on during his pontificate. He challenges all Catholics to **share the message of the Gospel** with joy and mercy. To preach by example, the Pope says the **Papacy should undergo a conversion**, that's more faithful to the "meaning which Jesus Christ wished to give it and to the present needs of evangelisation.

These are some of the **key points** of the document titled 'The Joy of the Gospel,' which the Pope says, must have 'important consequences.'

1. ACTION

The Pope isn't concerned about changing Church Doctrine, but rather in changing the way Christianity is presented to the world. He says talking about God, "**isn't about imposing beliefs**, but rather about sharing the joy of faith.

2. PROXIMITY

The humanity of the Catholic Church is one of the points he highlights, including showing 'mercy to the sinner.' He also calls for 'seeking the happiness of others' just as their heavenly Father does.' He invites Catholics evangelize on an individual and personal basis.

3. DON'T TURN A BLIND EYE

In his writings, the Pope calls on Christians to not turn a blind eye, before **social injustice**. He specifically calls out the 'economy of exclusion and inequality.' The '**tyranny**' of markets and the culture of idolizing money. He also addresses modern day slavery like forced prostitution and child labour, including begging.

4. WOMEN

The priestly ordination of women is not an option, but the Pope writes that **women should be given more concrete roles in the Church**. He also adds that being a priest is a role of service and "not of dignity or holiness." When it comes to **defending life**, the Pope says the Church will not change its stance on **abortion**, explaining that eliminating life is 'not progressive.' But he also questions whether the Church has done enough to help single pregnant women.

The document is **for all Catholics**, not just for Church superiors. The Pope also says that Jesus Christ breaks through the '**boring**' categories we often try to limit Him to.

It's a document where the Pope urges Catholics to **show the joy of faith**. But with faith, he says, comes the responsibility of sharing it.

Some Excerpts from Pope Francis' Letter *Evangelii Gaudium* (The Joy of the Gospel)

The **joy of the gospel** fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus. Those who accept his offer of salvation are set free from sin, sorrow, inner emptiness and loneliness. **With Christ joy is constantly born anew.** In this Exhortation I wish to encourage the Christian faithful to embark upon a new chapter of evangelization marked by this joy, while pointing out new paths for the Church's journey in years to come. (EG 1)

I invite all Christians, everywhere, at this very moment, to a renewed personal encounter with Jesus Christ, or at least an openness to letting him encounter them; I ask all of you to do this unfailingly each day. No one should think that this invitation is not meant for him or her, since "no one is excluded from the joy brought by the Lord" (EG 3)

There are Christians whose lives seem like Lent without Easter. I realize of course that **joy is not expressed the same way at all times in life, especially at moments of great difficulty. Joy adapts and changes, but it always endures,** even as a flicker of light born of our personal certainty that, when everything is said and done, we are infinitely loved. I understand the grief of people who have to endure great suffering, yet slowly but surely we all have to let the joy of faith slowly revive as a quiet yet firm trust, even amid the greatest distress (EG 6)

Here I have chosen to present some guidelines which can encourage and guide the whole Church in a new phase of evangelisation, one marked by enthusiasm and vitality. In this context, and on the basis of the teaching of the Dogmatic Constitution [Lumen Gentium](#) (Document on the Church from the Second Vatican Council), I have decided, among other themes, to discuss at length the following questions:

- a) the reform of the Church in her missionary outreach;*
- b) the temptations faced by pastoral workers;*
- c) the Church, understood as the entire People of God which evangelizes;*
- d) the homily and its preparation;*
- e) the inclusion of the poor in society;*
- f) peace and dialogue within society;*
- g) the spiritual motivations for mission.* (EG 17)

I dream of a "missionary option", that is, a missionary impulse capable of transforming everything, so that the Church's customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures can be suitably channelled for the evangelization of today's world rather than for her self-preservation. The renewal of structures demanded by pastoral conversion can only be understood in this light: as part of an effort to make them more mission-oriented, to make ordinary pastoral activity on every level more inclusive and open, to inspire in pastoral workers a constant desire to go forth and in this way to elicit a positive response from all those whom Jesus summons to friendship with himself. As [John Paul II](#) once said to the Bishops of Oceania: "All renewal in the Church must have mission as its goal if it is not to fall prey to a kind of ecclesial introversion". (EG 27)

It is my duty, as the Bishop of Rome, to be open to suggestions which can help make the exercise of my ministry more faithful to the meaning which Jesus Christ wished to give it and to the present needs of evangelization. (EG 32)