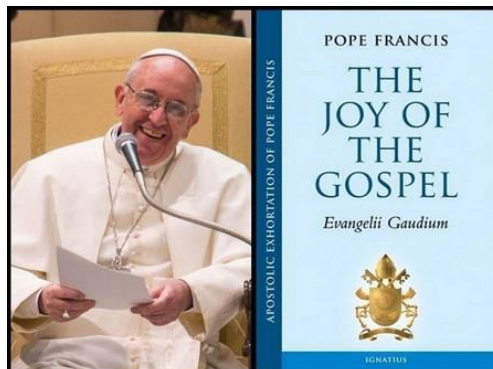


PRAYING THE JOY OF THE GOSPEL

This prayer is based on Chapter 1 of *Evangelii Gaudium*, the Apostolic Exhortation of Pope Francis.



THE CHURCH'S MISSIONARY TRANSFORMATION

I. Sign of the Cross: Leader

II. Opening Prayer: Leader

“The Word of God constantly shows us how God challenges those who believe in him ‘to go forth.’ [Abraham was called to go to a new land. Moses was called to lead the Hebrew people to the Promised Land. Jeremiah went wherever he was sent.] In our day, Jesus’ command to ‘go and make disciples’ echoes on the changing scenarios and ever new challenges to the Church’s mission of evangelization, and all of us are called to take part in this new missionary ‘going forth’(20)... Before all else, the Gospel invites us to respond to the love of God who saves us, to see God in others and to go forth from ourselves to seek the good of others.”(39)

III. Response: Pray together.

“A missionary heart is aware of these limits and makes itself ‘weak with the weak... everything for everyone’ (1 Cor 9:22). It never closes itself off, never retreats into its own security, never opts for rigidity and defensiveness. It realizes that it has to grow in its own understanding of the Gospel and in discerning the paths of the Spirit, and so it always does what good it can, even if in the process, its shoes get soiled by the mud of the street.” (45)

IV. Meditative Reading of The Joy of the Gospel: Reader

“Let us try a little harder to take the first step and to become involved. Jesus washed the feet of his disciples. The Lord gets involved and he involves his own, as he kneels to wash their feet. He tells his disciples: ‘You will be blessed if you do this’ (Jn 13:17). An evangelizing community gets involved by word and deed in people’s daily lives; it bridges distances, it is willing to abase itself if necessary and it embraces human life, touching the suffering flesh of Christ in others. Evangelizers thus take on the ‘smell of the sheep’ and the sheep are willing to hear their voice. An evangelizing community is also supportive, standing by people at every step of the way, no matter how difficult or lengthy this may prove to be. It is familiar with patient expectation and apostolic endurance. Evangelization consists mostly of patience and disregard for constraints of time. Faithful to the Lord’s gift, it also bears fruit.”(24)



V. Reflection:

Pope Francis calls us to be evangelizing communities who take on the smell of sheep! How does your evangelizing community take on the “smell of sheep” in word and deed? How do you lead the way? (*Discuss if time permits.*)

VI. Prayerful Response:

1. “A Church which ‘goes forth’ is a Church whose doors are open. Going out to others in order to reach the fringes of humanity does not mean rushing out aimlessly into the world. Often it is better simply to slow down, to put aside our eagerness in order to see and listen to others, to stop rushing from one thing to another and to remain with someone who has faltered along the way.” (46)
2. “The Church is called to be the house of the Father, with doors always wide open. One concrete sign of such openness is that our Church doors should always be open, so that if someone, moved by the Spirit, comes there looking for God, he or she will not find a closed door.” (47)
3. “If the whole Church takes up this missionary impulse, she has to go forth to everyone without exception. ...There can be no room for doubt or for explanations which weaken so clear a message... We have to state, without mincing words, that there is an inseparable bond between our faith and the poor. May we never abandon them.” (48)
4. “Let us go forth, then, let us go forth to offer everyone the life of Jesus Christ. I prefer a Church which is bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been out on the streets, rather than a Church which is unhealthy from being confined and from clinging to its own security.” (49)

VII. Closing Prayer: Leader

“The Word of God constantly shows us how God challenges those who believe in him to go forth... In our day, Jesus’ command to ‘go and make disciples,’ echoes on the changing scenarios and ever new challenges to the Church’s mission of evangelization, and all of us are called to take part in this new missionary going forth (#20)... Before all else, the Gospel invites us to respond to the love of God who saves us, to see God in others and to go forth from ourselves to seek the good of others.” (39) Let us end with a prayer of praise to the Trinity.

ALL: Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

