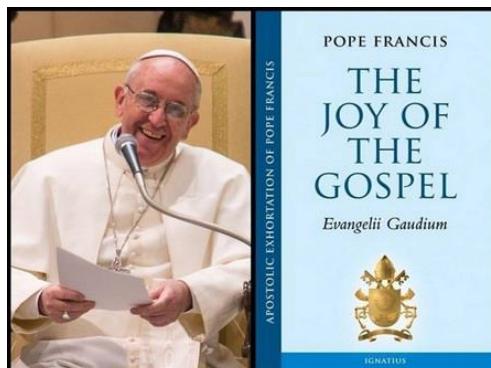


PRAYING THE JOY OF THE GOSPEL

This prayer is based on Chapter 3 of *Evangelii Gaudium*, the Apostolic Exhortation of Pope Francis.



THE PROCLAMATION OF THE GOSPEL

I. Sign of the Cross: Leader

II. Opening Prayer:

Leader:

“There can be no true evangelization without the explicit proclamation of Jesus as Lord,” and without “the primacy of the proclamation of Jesus Christ in all evangelizing work. (110) Evangelization is the task of the Church. (111)... (and) has to do with bringing the Gospel to the people we meet, whether they be our neighbors or complete strangers. (127)”

All: (Pray together.)

“All of us need to grow in Christ. Evangelization should stimulate a desire for this growth... (161) (and) openness to the message: approachability, readiness for dialogue, patience, a warmth and welcome which is non-judgmental. (165) For “God has already spoken, and there is nothing further that we need to know, which has not been revealed to us. (175)”

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

“Although it sounds obvious, spiritual accompaniment must lead others ever closer to God, in whom we attain true freedom. Some people think they are free if they can avoid God; they fail to see that they remain existentially orphaned, helpless, homeless. They cease being pilgrims and become drifters, flitting around themselves and never getting anywhere. To accompany them would be counterproductive if it became a sort of therapy supporting their self-absorption and ceased to be a pilgrimage with Christ to the Father. (170) Today more than ever we need men and women who, on the basis of their experience of accompanying others, are familiar with processes which call for prudence, understanding, patience and docility to the Spirit, so that they can protect the sheep from wolves who would scatter the flock. We need to practice the art of listening, which is more than simply hearing. Listening, in communication, is an openness of heart which makes possible that closeness without which genuine spiritual encounter cannot occur.

Listening helps us to find the right gesture and word which shows that we are more than simply bystanders. Only through such respectful and compassionate listening can we enter on the paths of true growth and awaken a yearning for the Christian ideal: the desire to respond fully to God’s love and to bring to fruition what he has sown in our lives. (171)



IV. Reflection:

Pope Francis explains that the “art of accompaniment” not only invites us to lead others closer to God but actually in walking with another, we acknowledge the God within him/her by –“removing our sandals before the sacred ground of the other” (cf. Ex 3:5). (169) The Holy Father implies that the art of accompaniment requires a personal cost in order to step onto “sacred ground of the other.” Recall a personal experience when “removing your sandals” allowed you to see and encounter Christ in the other? What was the personal cost? How does the experience continue to impact your life? (*Discuss if time permits.*)

V. 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)

VI. Closing Prayer: Leader

“There can be no true evangelization without the explicit proclamation of Jesus as Lord,” and without “the primacy of the proclamation of Jesus Christ in all evangelizing work. (110) Evangelization is the task of the Church. (111)... (and) has to do with bringing the Gospel to the people we meet, whether they be our neighbors or complete strangers. (127) Let us together offer a prayer of praise to the Holy 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.

