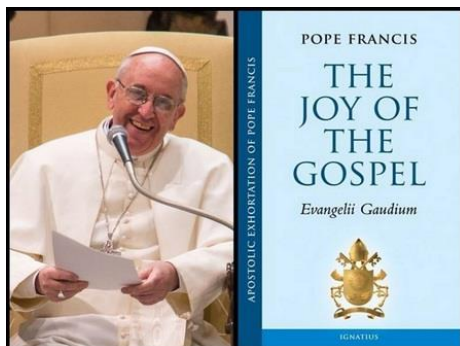


PRAYING THE JOY OF THE GOSPEL

This prayer is based on Chapter 4 of *Evangelii Gaudium*, the Apostolic Exhortation of Pope Francis.



THE SOCIAL DIMENSION OF EVANGELIZATION

I. Sign of the Cross: Leader

II. Opening Prayer

Reader 1:

“To believe in a Father who loves all men and women with an infinite love means realizing that ‘he thereby confers upon them an infinite dignity’. To believe that the Son of God assumed our human flesh means that each human person has been taken up into the very heart of God.

Reader 2:

To believe that Jesus shed his blood for us removes any doubt about the boundless love which ennobles each human being. Our redemption has a social dimension because ‘God, in Christ, redeems not only the individual person, but also the social relations existing between men’.

Reader 3:

To believe that the Holy Spirit is at work in everyone means realizing that he seeks to penetrate every human situation and all social bonds: ‘The Holy Spirit can be said to possess an infinite creativity, proper to the divine mind, which knows how to loosen the knots of human affairs, even the most complex and inscrutable.’ Evangelization is meant to cooperate with this liberating work of the Spirit.” (178)

III. Meditative Reading of The Joy of the Gospel

Reader 4:

“Each individual Christian and every community is called to be an instrument of God for the liberation and promotion of the poor, and for enabling them to be fully a part of society. This demands that we be docile and attentive to the cry of the poor and to come to their aid... If we, who are God’s means of hearing the poor, turn deaf ears to this plea, we oppose the Father’s will and his plan... The old question always returns: ‘How does God’s love abide in anyone who has the world’s goods, and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses help?’ (1 Jn. 3:17) (187) God’s heart has a special place for the poor, so much so that he himself ‘became poor’ (2 Cor. 8:9). (197) The new evangelization is an invitation to acknowledge the saving power at work in their lives and to put them at the center of the Church’s pilgrim way. We are called to find Christ in them, to lend our voice to their causes, but also to be their friends, to listen to them, to speak for them and to embrace the mysterious wisdom which God wishes to share with us through them.” (198)



IV. Reflection -Leader

Pope Francis writes: “an authentic faith – which is never comfortable or completely personal – always involves a deep desire to change the world, to transmit values, to leave this earth somehow better than we found it. We love this magnificent planet on which God has put us, and we love the human family which dwells here, with all its tragedies and struggles, its hopes and aspirations, its strengths and weaknesses.”(183) How does this statement energize you as a believer? (*Discuss if time permits.*)

V. Prayerful Response: Pray antiphonally.

- 1) “The very mystery of the Trinity reminds us that we have been created in the image of that divine communion, and so we cannot achieve fulfilment or salvation purely by our own efforts. From the heart of the Gospel we see the profound connection between evangelization and human advancement, which must necessarily find expression and develop in every work of evangelization.” (178)
- 2) “The entire history of our redemption is marked by the presence of the poor. Salvation came to us from the ‘yes’ uttered by a lowly maiden from a small town on the fringes of a great empire. The Saviour was born in a manger, in the midst of animals, like children of poor families; he was presented at the Temple along with two turtledoves, the offering made by those who could not afford a lamb; he was raised in a home of ordinary workers and worked with his own hands to earn his bread.” (197)
- 1) “Jesus, the evangelizer par excellence and the Gospel in person, identifies especially with the little ones (cf. *Mt 25:40*). This reminds us Christians that we are called to care for the vulnerable of the earth. But the current model, with its emphasis on success and self-reliance, does not appear to favor an investment in efforts to help the slow, the weak or the less talented to find opportunities in life.” (209)
- 2) “In her dialogue with the State and with society, the Church does not have solutions for every particular issue. Together with the various sectors of society, she supports those programs which best respond to the dignity of each person and the common good.” (241)

VI. Closing Prayer: Leader

“For the Church, the option for the poor is primarily a theological category rather than a cultural, sociological, political or philosophical one. God shows the poor his first mercy. This divine preference has consequences for the faith life of all Christians...This is why I want a Church which is poor and for the poor. They have much to teach us... in their difficulties they know the suffering Christ. We need to let ourselves be evangelized by them.” (198)



Let us close our prayer with the Prayer of St. Francis, our Holy Father’s patron:

All: Lord, make me an instrument of Your peace. Where there is hatred, let me sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; where there is sadness, joy.

O, Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console; to be understood as to understand; to be loved as to love; For it is in giving that we receive; it is in pardoning that we are pardoned; it is in dying that we are born again to eternal life.