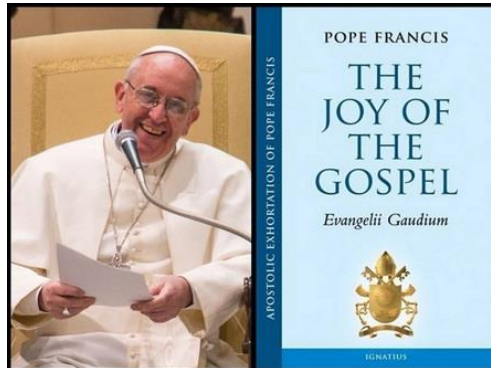


PRAYING THE JOY OF THE GOSPEL

This prayer is based on Chapter 2 of *Evangelii Gaudium*, the Apostolic Exhortation of Pope Francis.



AMID THE CRISIS OF COMMUNAL COMMITMENT

I. **Sign of the Cross: Leader**

II. **Opening Prayer: Leader**

“We need to distinguish clearly what might be a fruit of the kingdom from what runs counter to God’s plan. This involves not only recognizing and discerning spirits, but also –and this is decisive–choosing movements of the spirit of good and rejecting those of the spirit of evil.” (51) “In our time humanity is experiencing a turning point in its history, as we can see from the advances being made in so many fields. We can only praise the steps being taken to improve people’s welfare in areas such as health care, education, and communications. At the same time we have to remember that the majority of our contemporaries are barely living from day to day, with dire consequences... The joy of living frequently fades, lack of respect for others and violence are on the rise, and inequality is increasingly evident. We are in an age of knowledge and information, which has led to new and often anonymous kinds of power.” (54)

III. **Response: All**

“Exclusion ultimately has to do with what it means to be a part of the society in which we live; those excluded are no longer society’s underside or its fringes or its disenfranchised – they are no longer even a part of it. The excluded are not the ‘exploited’ but the outcast, the ‘leftovers’. Almost without being aware of it, we end up being incapable of feeling compassion at the outcry of the poor, weeping for other people’s pain, and feeling a need to help them, as though all this were someone else’s responsibility and not our own.” (54)

IV. **Meditation: Reader**

“Despite the tide of secularism which has swept our societies, in many countries – even those where Christians are a minority – the Catholic Church is considered a credible institution by public opinion, and trusted for her solidarity and concern for those in greatest need. Again and again, the Church has acted as a mediator in finding solutions to problems affecting peace, social harmony, the land, the defense of life, human and civil rights, and so forth. This is a good thing. Yet, we find it difficult to make people see that when we raise other questions less palatable to public opinion, we are doing so out of fidelity to precisely the same convictions about human dignity and the common good. (65) The family is experiencing a profound cultural crisis as are all communities and social bonds. In the case of the family, the weakening of these bonds is particularly serious because the family is the fundamental cell of society where we learn to live with others despite our differences and to belong to one another; it is also the place where parents pass on the faith to their children.” (66)



V. Reflection and Discussion: Leader

In what way do I bear fruit in accord with the will of God? And how do I use this fruit to encourage those to whom I minister, to bear fruit within their families, friendships, and the greater community?

VI. Petitions: Side 1 and 2

1. "The current financial crisis can make us overlook the fact that it originated in a profound human crisis: the denial of the primacy of the human person! We have created new idols. The worship of the ancient gold calf (Ex 32:1-35) has returned in a new and ruthless guise in the idolatry of money and the dictatorship of an impersonal economy lacking a truly human purpose." (55)
2. "Ethics has come to be viewed with a certain scornful derision. It is seen as counterproductive, too human, because it makes money and power relative. It is felt to be a threat, since it condemns the manipulation and debasement of the person. In effect, ethics leads to a God who calls for a committed response which is outside of the categories of the marketplace." (57)
1. "Today in many places we hear a call for greater security. But until exclusion and inequality in society and between peoples is reversed, it will be impossible to eliminate violence. The poor and the poorer peoples are accused of violence, yet without equal opportunities the different forms of aggression and conflict will find a fertile terrain for growth and eventually explode." (59)
2. "The immense importance of a culture marked by faith cannot be overlooked; before the onslaught of contemporary secularism an evangelized culture, for all its limits, has many more resources than the mere sum total of believers. An evangelized popular culture contains values of faith and solidarity capable of encouraging the development of a more just and believing society, and possesses a particular wisdom which ought to be gratefully acknowledged." (68)
1. "Today, when the networks and means of human communication have made unprecedented advances, we sense the challenge of finding and sharing a 'mystique' of living together, of mingling and encounter, of embracing and supporting one another, of stepping into this flood tide which, while chaotic, can become a genuine experience of fraternity, a caravan of solidarity, a sacred pilgrimage." (87)

VII. Closing Prayer: Leader

"Genuine forms of popular religiosity are incarnate, since they are born of the incarnation of Christian faith in popular culture. For this reason they entail a personal relationship, not with vague spiritual energies or powers, but with God, with Christ, with Mary, with the saints. These devotions are fleshy, they have a face. They are capable of fostering relationships and not just enabling escapism. In other parts of our society, we see the growing attraction to various forms of a 'spirituality of well-being' divorced from any community life, or to a 'theology of prosperity' detached from responsibility for our brothers and sisters or to depersonalized experiences which are nothing more than a form of self-centeredness." (90) Let us close our prayer with the prayer our Holy Father, Pope Francis encourages us:

All: "Lord, I have let myself be deceived; in a thousand ways I have shunned your love, yet here I am once more, to renew my covenant with you. I need you. Save me once again, Lord, take me once more into your redeeming embrace."