



# The Joy of the Gospel

DISCOVERING THE JOY OF ENCOUNTER



# Prayer for Evangelization

Loving God, you called each of us by name, and gave your only Son to redeem us. In your faithfulness, you sent the Holy Spirit to complete the mission of Jesus among us. Open our hearts to Jesus. Give us the courage to speak his name to those who are close to us, and the generosity to share his love with those who are far away. We pray that every person throughout the world be invited to know and love Jesus as Savior and Redeemer. May they come to know his all-surpassing love. May that love transform every element of our society. Amen.

## Scripture - Luke 10:21-22



At that very moment he rejoiced [in] the holy Spirit and said, "I give you praise, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for although you have hidden these things from the wise and the learned you have revealed them to the childlike. Yes, Father, such has been your gracious will. All things have been handed over to me by my Father. No one knows who the Son is except the Father, and who the Father is except the Son and anyone to whom the Son wishes to reveal him."



# Distinguishing

- ▶ Feeling Pleasure—biological reaction that stimulates a certain part of the nervous system
- ▶ Feeling Good—an extended time of not feeling anxiety and enjoying things
- ▶ Being Happy—finding a state in life where who-I-am generally corresponds to the world around me
- ▶ Having Joy—sustaining a sense of delight because of often-selfless relationships of love for others



# Good News

How does the Good News of Jesus bring me to a state of life whereby I am able to sustain a great sense of delight because of the selfless love that I have come to have for others?





# Joy of the Gospel

Being a Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction. (7)





# Personal Encounter

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 unflinchingly 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". (3)



# Encounter

With our best friends:

- ▶ We are open and comfortable
- ▶ We feel their support
- ▶ We give support in return
- ▶ We do not set pre-conditions to the relationship
- ▶ We look forward to ongoing encounters

How are we with Jesus Christ?





## Spend a few moments...

- ▶ Think of your relationship with Christ as a friendship.
- ▶ Describe how this relationship has grown over time.
- ▶ Describe the moments you felt closest to Jesus.
- ▶ Describe the ways in which you feel Jesus' support.



# Encounter with Christ

Thanks solely to this encounter – or renewed encounter – with God’s love, which blossoms into an enriching friendship, we are liberated from our narrowness and self-absorption.

We become fully human when we become more than human, when we let God bring us beyond ourselves in order to attain the fullest truth of our being.

Here we find the source and inspiration of all our efforts at evangelization. For if we have received the love which restores meaning to our lives, how can we fail to share that love with others? (8)



# Encounter - Forgiveness

Christ, who told us to forgive one another "seventy times seven" (*Mt 18:22*) has given us his example: he has forgiven us seventy times seven. Time and time again he bears us on his shoulders. No one can strip us of the dignity bestowed upon us by this boundless and unfailing love. (3)



# Initiative of love and joy

The Church which “goes forth” is a community of missionary disciples who take the first step, who are involved and supportive, who bear fruit and rejoice. An evangelizing community knows that the Lord has taken the initiative, he has loved us first (cf. *1 Jn*4:19), and therefore we can move forward, boldly take the initiative, go out to others, seek those who have fallen away, stand at the crossroads and welcome the outcast. Such a community has an endless desire to show mercy, the fruit of its own experience of the power of the Father’s infinite mercy. Let us try a little harder to take the first step and to become involved. (24)



# Forgiveness

- ▶ What is it like to be forgiven by a friend or family member?
- ▶ When did I find myself forgiving another; what was the motive?
- ▶ What happened as a result of the forgiveness?
- ▶ What happened when I refused to forgive another?

God takes the initiative to forgive us for the sake of freeing and healing us from the ways we have hurt ourselves and others by our actions and omissions.



# Bah Humbug...

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. (6)





## Take a few moments...

- ▶ When have you felt God's forgiveness in your life?
- ▶ How hard was it to ask for that forgiveness?
- ▶ How difficult to receive that forgiveness?
- ▶ What was the consequence in your life of being forgiven by God?



# Christianity is a long wake

Consequently, an evangelizer must never look like someone who has just come back from a funeral! Let us recover and deepen our enthusiasm, that “delightful and comforting joy of evangelizing, even when it is in tears that we must sow...” (10)







# Holy Spirit Given to Us

In every activity of evangelization, the primacy always belongs to God, who has called us to cooperate with him and who leads us on by the power of his Spirit. The real newness is the newness which God himself mysteriously brings about and inspires, provokes, guides and accompanies in a thousand ways. The life of the Church should always reveal clearly that God takes the initiative, that "he has loved us first" (*1 Jn 4:19*) and that he alone "gives the growth" (*1 Cor 3:7*). This conviction enables us to maintain a spirit of joy in the midst of a task so demanding and challenging that it engages our entire life. God asks everything of us, yet at the same time he offers everything to us. (12)



- ▶ What have been the best human transactions in your life?
- ▶ What were the attitudes that led to those transactions?
- ▶ How did others make you feel during the encounter or exchange?
- ▶ What did the positive feelings accomplish in the long run?

Out of sheer love, God offers us a chance to share in God's divine life, removing from us the fear and insecurity of our lives, and letting us know a joy that changes us.



## Take a few minutes...

- ▶ Identify joyful moments in your faith life.
- ▶ Identity tense moments in your faith life.
- ▶ In what ways has fear been part of our sense of God?
- ▶ In what ways has fear been overcome in your sense of God?



# Showing our joy as a community

I am aware that nowadays documents do not arouse the same interest as in the past and that they are quickly forgotten. Nevertheless, I want to emphasize that what I am trying to express here has a **programmatic significance** and important consequences. I hope that all communities will devote the necessary effort to advancing along the path of a pastoral and missionary conversion which cannot leave things as they presently are. (25)



# Spreading Joy

- ▶ How can I show more clearly the joy that is part of my faith?
- ▶ How can my family more clearly show the joy we have in Jesus?
- ▶ How can our parish community better radiate its joy?



# Follow-up

- ▶ Use the questions raised by the theme of “encounter” to explore your own faith life—how you affirm it, how you express it, how you might share it.
- ▶ Use some of these questions with others—committees, organizations, parish staff and parish council—to help parish leaders, friends, and family affirm their experience of faith.
- ▶ Meditate on the Scripture at the start of this session as a point of prayer this week (Luke 10:21-22).

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