

Gaudete et Exsultate: Rejoice and Be Glad.

❖ Chapter One: The Call to Holiness

- Pope Francis is talking about call to holiness in today's world.
 - Call to holiness has long roots in the Church
 - LG – baptismal call to holiness lived in unique ways by each of us
 - GS – Church/holiness happens in the world. When we immerse ourselves in the world, we grow in holiness, and in turn does the world.
 - Great Cloud of witnesses – OT and NT and saints throughout history
 - Abraham, Sarah, Moses, Gideon and others...
 - John of the Cross/each lives and interprets in his/her own way #11
 - Josephine Bakhita #32
 - Maria Gabriella Sagheddu #5
 - Women – Catherine, Hedwig, Therese of Liseux, Teresa of Avila
 - Men – Augustine, Francis of Assisi, John Chrysostum, Aquinas, Ignatius
 - Total of 24 Saints/holy people mentioned as examples
- ❖ Don't fear holiness; it is something that progresses throughout our lives and brings us to our deepest self.

QUESTIONS for tables

- **How can holiness be lived by children, teens, young adults, those in middle age, the elderly?**
- **Who are some people/what are some actions in our world today that help you see and grow in holiness?**

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Chapter Two: Enemies of Holiness – two heresies

❖ Gnosticism

- Gnosticism is most sinister.
 - Values knowledge above all else. Thinking you have the right answers and others do not.
 - Considering one's own vision of reality to be perfect – having answer to every question
 - Domesticates the mystery of God and the Church
- We are judged not by our knowledge but the depth of our charity #37

❖ Pelagianism

- Replaces mystery and grace with human will.
 - Observes certain rules, ways of acting, customs; remains wedded to a particular style of Catholicism # 58
 - Church is not a museum or possession of few.
- ❖ Excessive concern with self-help programs, and personal fulfillment rather than letting the Spirit guide us to love. #57
 - Second Council of Orange taught that nothing human can demand, merit or buy grace
 - Trent: we are said to be justified gratuitously for nothing precedes justification – neither faith nor works. #53
- We are judged not by our knowledge but the depth of our charity #37
- Grace works progressively in our lives and in human history. #50

QUESTIONS for tables

What is mystery? What is grace? How have you experienced these in your own life, or observed them in the lives of others?

Pope Francis says that Jesus shows us only the face of God reflected in our brothers and sisters. When and where have you seen God reflected in the face of another?

Can you point to a time in history when God's grace was most prevalent in the world?

Chapter Three: In the Light of the Master

❖ The Beatitudes are a Christian's identity card.

- **Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.**
 - Wealth ensures nothing.
 - Spiritual poverty #69- a holy indifference to all created things so that we can have interior freedom (Ignatius of Loyola)
 - Living a plain and austere life.
- **Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.**
 - Perfect charity consists in putting up with others' mistakes and not being scandalized by their faults #72 – Therese of Lisieux
 - If I am meek, people will think me an idiot – they may, but so be it. It is between to be meek. #74
- **Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.**
 - We spend a lot of time looking away from suffering, sickness, sorrow.
 - The cross can never be absent (there is no crossless Christianity)
 - We discover the meaning of life by coming to the aid of those who suffer, understanding their anguish and bringing your relief.
 - Weep with those who weep. # 76

- **Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.**
 - Sooner or later, Jesus says, justice will come. We need to cooperate to bring about justice, even though we may not see it come. #77 (Oscar Romero)
 - Every decision we make must be a just one...for everyone, especially the poor and disenfranchised.
- **Blessed are the merciful for they will receive mercy.**
 - Do unto others as you would have them do onto you in EVERY situation.
 - The yardstick we use for giving will measure what we will receive.
 - We need to see ourselves as part of the army of the forgiven... we should show mercy as it has been given to us.
- **Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.**
 - A heart capable of love admits nothing that might harm, weaken or endanger that love.
 - A heart that loves God and neighbor genuinely is a pure heart and it can see God.
- **Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.**
 - We are all capable of sowing conflict, most often with our words, gossip.
 - Peacemakers build peace and friendship in society
 - This peace exclude no one and is very demanding.
- **Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.**
 - Whatever weariness and pain we may experience in living the commandment of love and following the way of justice, the cross remains the source of our growth and sanctification. #92

❖ **The Great Criterion (Matthew 25: 31-46)**

- Holiness cannot be lived apart from these demands; mercy is the beating heart of the Gospel.
- This involves a constant and healthy unease.
- This also means social change.
- Cannot relativize
- Welcome all like Christ (Benedict, # 102)
- Prayer nourishes our ability to love.

QUESTIONS for tables

When and where do you find time for prayer? How does prayer feed our ability to love?

Which of the beatitudes do you find most challenging? Why?

❖ **Chapter Four: Signs of Holiness in today's World**

➤ **Five great expressions of love for God and neighbor in light of today's culture.**

- **Perseverance, Patience and Meekness**
 - Solid grounding in God
 - Combat our inclinations to selfishness and aggression
 - Verbal violence is unacceptable
 - Saints don't waste time complaining about the failings of others; they hold their tongues.
 - Humiliation makes us resemble Christ; it is unavoidable for the true follower.
- **Joy and a Sense of Humor**
 - Saints are joyful and full of good humor.

- Hard times may come, but what endures is the reality that we are infinitely loved.
- **Boldness and Passion**
 - Holiness is a boldness, an impulse to leave a mark in the world, to evangelize.
 - The Lord calls us to put our nets out into the deep.
 - Boldness and apostolic courage are essential to our mission
 - Go to the fringes; it is there that we find Jesus
 - If we are bold and courageous, the Church will constantly welcome the Lord's surprises.
- **In Community**
 - If we are isolated from the community, it is easier to be tempted.
 - Growth in holiness is a journey in community, side by side.
 - In community, we can face great hardships (#141 – Tibhirine, Paul Miki, Andre Taegon, Seven Holy Founders of Servants of Mary...)
 - Sharing the Word and celebrating Eucharist together fosters community and makes us a holy and missionary community.
 - Pay attention to details #144
 - ◆ Wine running out
 - ◆ One missing sheep
 - ◆ Spare oil for the lamps
 - ◆ Asking how much bread there was
 - ◆ Having a fire and fish cooking
- **In Constant Prayer**
 - Remain always in the presence of God, real, imaginative as is possible by your work

- Listen to God in the midst of silence
- Prayers of supplication are indication that we trust God and realize we cannot do things by ourselves.
- Holy Communion allows us to renew our covenant with Jesus and allows him to more fully transform our lives.

QUESTIONS for tables

What are some of the little details that you noticed recently that led to responding to the needs of others?

In what ways does being in community strengthen your own spiritual life?

❖ **Chapter Five: Spiritual Combat, Vigilance and Discernment**

- We battle the world and a worldly mentality, as well as the devil.
- Keep our lamps lit; do not let your spiritual life turn lukewarm
- Discernment is a gift we must ask God for; it calls for more than intelligence or common sense.
- Discernment keeps us from a culture of zapping; it keeps us focused on what is important
- Discernment is a grace.
- Understand that God's timetable and patience are needed for discernment; never our own