



Leaving the self behind... to encounter others

With his Apostolic Letter

Evangelii Gaudium - „The Joy of the Gospel”

Pope Francis calls on the Church to move away from self-centered concerns to meet the needs of our world in a new missionary dynamic. In his powerful down-to-earth language he invites the whole Church and each one of us, to renew our relationship with Jesus and His Word, to break out of our individualistic preoccupations and our comfortable lives and open ourselves to the needs of the poor and weak. Evangelii Gaudium addresses with great openness, what has been going wrong in our world, in the Church and in ourselves. Pope Francis, marked as he is by the spirituality of St. Ignatius, wants to lead us from “desolation”, inner darkness and sadness to “consolation”, joy and inner peace of heart. The following texts from Evangelii Gaudium are meant to inspire us during the weeks of lent to personal reflection and common sharing.

- ✿ **The joy of the gospel fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus.** Those who accept his offer of salvation are set free from sin, sorrow, inner emptiness and loneliness. With Christ joy is constantly born anew. Our infinite sadness can only be cured by an infinite love. (Evangelii Gaudium 1+265)
- ✿ **Life grows by being given away**, and it weakens in isolation and comfort. Indeed, those who enjoy life most are those who leave security on the shore and become excited by the mission of communicating life to others... Life is attained and matures in the measure that it is offered up in order to give life to others. This is certainly what mission means. (10)
- ✿ **The great danger in today’s world**, pervaded as it is by consumerism, **is the desolation and anguish born of a complacent yet covetous heart**, the feverish pursuit of frivolous pleasures, and a blunted conscience. Whenever our interior life becomes caught up in its own interests and concerns, there is no longer room for others, no place for the poor. God’s voice is no longer heard, the quiet joy of his love is no longer felt, and the desire to do good fade. This is a very real danger for believers too. Many fall prey to it, and end up resentful, angry and listless. That is no way to live a dignified and fulfilled life; it is not God’s will for us, nor is it the life in the Spirit which has its source in the heart of the risen Christ. (2)
- ✿ If we do not feel an intense desire to share this love, we need to pray insistently that he will once more touch our hearts. We need to implore his grace daily, asking him to **open our cold hearts and shake up our lukewarm and superficial existence.** (264)



- Which moods and attitudes are predominant in my life? The joy to be loved by God, a desire to do good, a sense of gratitude for the gifts of every day? Or is my life rather overshadowed by sadness, loneliness and emptiness?
- Do I try to live each day attentively and consciously or do I allow myself to be carried away by the useless worries and superficial attractions of life?