

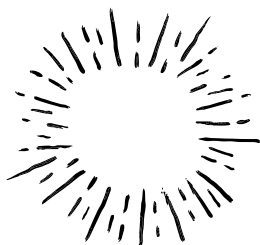
REJOICE & BE GLAD - REFLECTION GUIDE

CHAPTER ONE: THE CALL TO HOLINESS

Re-read these excerpts from chapter one of *Gaudete Et Exultate* (Rejoice and Be Glad), Pope Francis' exhortation 'On the Call to Holiness in Today's World' and reflect on the following questions.

Read "The processes of beatification and canonization recognize the signs of heroic virtue, the sacrifice of one's life in martyrdom, and certain cases where a life is constantly offered for others, even until death. This shows an exemplary imitation of Christ, one worthy of the admiration of the faithful". (5)

Reflect The Church raises us the example of holy men and women to help us grow in holiness through their example and intercession. Who are your favorite canonized saints? Why? Do you pray regularly for their intercession?



Read "Nor need we think only of those already beatified and canonized. The Holy Spirit bestows holiness in abundance among God's holy and faithful people...I like to contemplate the holiness present in the patience of God's people: in those parents who raise their children with immense love, in those men and women who work hard to support their families, in the sick, in elderly religious who never lose their smile." (6-7)

Reflect Who have been your role models and mentors in faith? Why do you consider them saintly?

Read "This is a powerful summons to all of us. You too need to see the entirety of your life as a mission. Try to do so by listening to God in prayer and recognizing the signs that he gives you. Always ask the Spirit what Jesus expects from you at every moment of your life and in every decision, you must make, so as to discern its place in the mission you have received. Allow the Spirit to forge in you the personal mystery that can reflect Jesus Christ in today's world." (23)

Reflect Consider your role in your family, friendships, and profession. What are specific ways you can "be holy"? Who are the people God has placed in your life? How can you witness to them?

Read "The presence of constantly new gadgets, the excitement of travel and an endless array of consumer goods at times leave no room for God's voice to be heard. We are overwhelmed by words, by superficial pleasures and by an increasing din, filled not by joy but rather by the discontent of those, whose lives have lost meaning. How can we fail to realize the need to stop this rat race and to recover the personal space needed to carry on a heartfelt dialogue with God? Finding that space may prove painful but it is always fruitful." (29)

Reflect What are your greatest distractions or obstacles to being a saint today? What new daily or weekly habits would help you to grow in holiness?



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CHAPTER TWO: TWO SUBTLE ENEMIES OF HOLINESS

Re-read these excerpts from chapter two of *Gaudete Et Exsultate* (Rejoice and Be Glad), Pope Francis' exhortation 'On the Call to Holiness in Today's World' and reflect on the following questions.



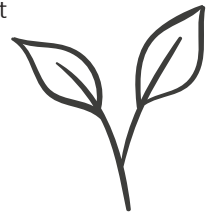
Read "God infinitely transcends us; he is full of surprises. We are not the ones to determine when and how we will encounter him... Nor can we claim to say where God is not, because God is mysteriously present in the life of every person... Even when someone's life appears completely wrecked, even when we see it devastated by vices or addictions, God is present there. If we let ourselves be guided by the Spirit rather than our own preconceptions, we can and must try to find the Lord in every human life." (41-42)

Reflect Can you recall a time when an unlikely person "surprised" you and showed you the presence of Christ? How can you seek the Lord and His goodness in every person you meet?

Read "We can think that because we know something, or are able to explain it in certain terms, we are already saints, perfect and better than the "ignorant masses". Saint John Paul II warned of the temptation on the part of those in the Church who are more highly educated "to feel somehow superior to other members of the faithful". In point of fact, what we think we know should always motivate us to respond more fully to God's love. Indeed, "you learn so as to live: theology and holiness are inseparable". (45)

Reflect Pope Francis and St. John Paul II warn us of the temptation to feel somehow superior to others, especially if we know more than them or have some kind of "advantage". Who are the people in your life you feel superior to? How might you use your knowledge or giftedness to love better and pursue greater holiness?

Read "Grace, precisely because it builds on nature, does not make us superhuman all at once. That kind of thinking would show too much confidence in our own abilities... Unless we can acknowledge our concrete and limited situation, we will not be able to see the real and possible steps that the Lord demands of us at every moment, once we are attracted and empowered by his gift." (50)



Reflect Do you find yourself becoming impatient with your growth in holiness? Do you have limitations only grace can overcome?

Read "[God's] friendship infinitely transcends us; we cannot buy it with our works, it can only be a gift born of his loving initiative. This invites us to live in joyful gratitude for this completely unmerited gift... Yet we cannot celebrate this free gift of the Lord's friendship unless we realize that our earthly life and our natural abilities are his gift." (54)

Reflect What people, experiences, or other gifts has God given you to grow in holiness? How might you use those gifts better? How can you take time to express gratitude to God in prayer?

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CHAPTER THREE: IN THE LIGHT OF THE MASTER, PART ONE

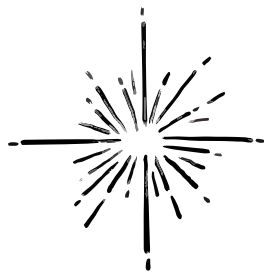
Re-read these excerpts from chapter three of *Gaudete Et Exultate* (Rejoice and Be Glad), Pope Francis' exhortation 'On the Call to Holiness in Today's World' and reflect on the following questions.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven"

Read "Wealth ensures nothing. Indeed, once we think we are rich, we can become so self-satisfied that we leave no room for God's word, for the love of our brothers and sisters, or for the enjoyment of the most important things in life. In this way, we miss out on the greatest treasure of all. That is why Jesus calls blessed those who are poor in spirit, those who have a poor heart, for there the Lord can enter with his perennial newness." (68)

Reflect What material goods do you have the strongest attachment to? Do they get in the way of your relationship with God, our friends or family?

"Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth"



Read "Christ says: "Learn from me; for I am gentle and humble of heart, and you will find rest for your souls" (Mt 11:29). If we are constantly upset and impatient with others, we will end up drained and weary. But if we regard the faults and limitations of others with tenderness and meekness, without an air of superiority, we can actually help them and stop wasting our energy on useless complaining. Saint Thérèse of Lisieux tells us that "perfect charity consists in putting up with others' mistakes, and not being scandalized by their faults"" (72)

Reflect Can you think of a time when you have been wrong, made a mistake or been humiliated? How might you treat others with the same humility and patience you desired for yourself in that situation?

"Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted"

Read "A person who sees things as they truly are and sympathizes with pain and sorrow is capable of touching life's depths and finding authentic happiness. He or she is consoled, not by the world but by Jesus. Such persons are unafraid to share in the suffering of others; they do not flee from painful situations. They discover the meaning of life by coming to the aid of those who suffer, understanding their anguish and bringing relief. They sense that the other is flesh of our flesh, and are not afraid to draw near, even to touch their wounds. They feel compassion for others in such a way that all distance vanishes. (76)

Reflect Is there a person in your life who is grieving or experiencing suffering of some kind? How might you "draw near" to them in practical ways?

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled"

Read "True justice comes about in people's lives when they themselves are just in their decisions; it is expressed in their pursuit of justice for the poor and the weak. While it is true that the word "justice" can be a synonym for faithfulness to God's will in every aspect of our life, if we give the word too general a meaning, we forget that it is shown especially in justice towards those who are most vulnerable." (79)

Reflect How may God be calling you to use your blessings and gifts for the benefit of those who are weak, vulnerable or oppressed? In what areas of life do you feel called to act for justice?

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CHAPTER THREE: IN THE LIGHT OF THE MASTER, PART TWO

Re-read these excerpts from chapter three of *Gaudete Et Exultate* (Rejoice and Be Glad), Pope Francis' exhortation 'On the Call to Holiness in Today's World' and reflect on the following questions.

"Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy"

Read "We need to think of ourselves as an army of the forgiven. All of us have been looked upon with divine compassion. If we approach the Lord with sincerity and listen carefully, there may well be times when we hear his reproach: "Should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?" (Mt 18:33)." (82)

Reflect When has the Lord or some person shown you mercy? Is there someone in your life in need of your love and mercy?

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God"

Read "The Lord expects a commitment to our brothers and sisters that comes from the heart. For "if I give away all I have, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but have no love, I gain nothing" (1 Cor 13:3)... From the heart's intentions come the desires and the deepest decisions that determine our actions." (85)



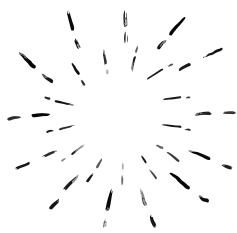
Reflect When you offer help or service to someone is it out of a sense of obligation or out of love? What does it mean to be more pure of heart in your life?

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God"

Read "It is not easy to "make" this evangelical peace, which excludes no one but embraces even those who are a bit odd, troublesome or difficult, demanding, different, beaten down by life or simply uninterested. It is hard work; it calls for great openness of mind and heart, since it is not about creating "a consensus on paper or a transient peace for a contented minority", or a project "by a few for the few". Nor can it attempt to ignore or disregard conflict; instead, it must "face conflict head on, resolve it and make it a link in the chain of a new process". We need to be artisans of peace, for building peace is a craft that demands serenity, creativity, sensitivity and skill." (89)

Reflect Where do you see violence or conflict in your family, workplace or community? How might you make peace with "serenity, creativity, sensitivity and skill?"

"Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven"



Read "Jesus himself warns us that the path he proposes goes against the flow, even making us challenge society by the way we live and, as a result, becoming a nuisance. He reminds us how many people have been, and still are, persecuted simply because they struggle for justice, because they take seriously their commitment to God and to others. Unless we wish to sink into an obscure mediocrity, let us not long for an easy life, for "whoever would save his life will lose it" (Mt 16:25)." (90)

Reflect Have you ever been persecuted, ridiculed or judged for your faith? Do you become defensive or even angry? How might God be calling you to respond differently, more like Christ?

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CHAPTER FOUR: SIGNS OF HOLINESS IN TODAY'S WORLD

Re-read these excerpts from chapter four of *Gaudete Et Exultate* (Rejoice and Be Glad), Pope Francis' exhortation 'On the Call to Holiness in Today's World' and reflect on the following questions.

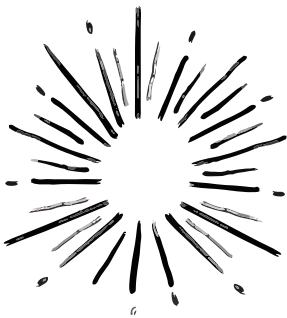
Read "Inner strength, as the work of grace, prevents us from becoming carried away by the violence that is so much a part of life today, because grace defuses vanity and makes possible meekness of heart. The saints do not waste energy complaining about the failings of others; they can hold their tongue before the faults of their brothers and sisters, and avoid the verbal violence that demeans and mistreats others. Saints hesitate to treat others harshly; they consider others better than themselves (cf. Phil 2:3)." (116)



Reflect When do you witness complaints, judgements or mistreatment of others? Are you ever tempted to participate? How might you react more like the saints?

Read "Holiness is also parrhesía: it is boldness, an impulse to evangelize and to leave a mark in this world. To allow us to do this, Jesus himself comes and tells us once more, serenely yet firmly: "Do not be afraid" (Mk 6:50). "I am with you always, to the end of the world" (Mt 28:20). These words enable us to go forth and serve with the same courage that the Holy Spirit stirred up in the Apostles, impelling them to proclaim Jesus Christ. Boldness, enthusiasm, the freedom to speak out, apostolic fervour... the freedom of a life open to God and to others." (129)

Reflect Do you live your faith in a bold way? How? Who models that for you? Have you ever thought of boldness as a Christian virtue?



Read "Let us not forget that Jesus asked his disciples to pay attention to details. The little detail that wine was running out at a party. The little detail that one sheep was missing... The little detail of asking the disciples how many loaves of bread they had. The little detail of having a fire burning and a fish cooking as he waited for the disciples at daybreak. A community that cherishes the little details of love, whose members care for one another and create an open and evangelizing environment, is a place where the risen Lord is present, sanctifying it in accordance with the Father's plan." (143, 145)

Reflect What are the details of your daily life God is asking you to be more attentive to? Are these details attended to with love? Do they make your community more "open and evangelizing"?

Read "Are there moments when you place yourself quietly in the Lord's presence, when you calmly spend time with him, when you bask in his gaze? Do you let his fire inflame your heart? Unless you let him warm you more and more with his love and tenderness, you will not catch fire. How will you then be able to set the hearts of others on fire by your words and witness? If, gazing on the face of Christ, you feel unable to let yourself be healed and transformed, then enter into the Lord's heart, into his wounds, for that is the abode of divine mercy." (151)

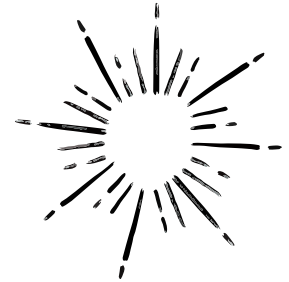
Reflect When in your day do you find quiet time? How might you find more quiet to spend with in prayer with Jesus who is Holiness?

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CHAPTER FIVE: SPIRITUAL COMBAT, VIGILANCE, AND DISCERNMENT

Re-read these excerpts from chapter five of *Gaudete Et Exsultate* (Rejoice and Be Glad), Pope Francis' exhortation 'On the Call to Holiness in Today's World' and reflect on the following questions.

Read "The path of holiness is a source of peace and joy, given to us by the Spirit. At the same time, it demands that we keep "our lamps lit" (Lk 12:35) and be attentive. "Abstain from every form of evil" (1 Thess 5:22). "Keep awake" (Mt 24:42; Mk 13:35). "Let us not fall asleep" (1 Thess 5:6). Those who think they commit no grievous sins against God's law can fall into a state of dull lethargy. Since they see nothing serious to reproach themselves with, they fail to realize that their spiritual life has gradually turned lukewarm. They end up weakened and corrupted." (164)



Reflect Have you ever experienced a season of spiritual lethargy? How can the Sacraments and prayer help you more awaken in your faith?

Read "The gift of discernment has become all the more necessary today, since contemporary life offers immense possibilities for action and distraction, and the world presents all of them as valid and good... We can navigate simultaneously on two or more screens and interact at the same time with two or three virtual scenarios. Without the wisdom of discernment, we can easily become prey to every passing trend... If we ask with confidence that the Holy Spirit grant us this gift, and then seek to develop it through prayer, reflection, reading and good counsel, then surely we will grow in this spiritual endowment." (166-167)

Reflect Is there an area in your life where the way forward is unclear? How might you ask God for direction?



Read "We must remember that prayerful discernment must be born of a readiness to listen: to the Lord and to others, and to reality itself, which always challenges us in new ways. Only if we are prepared to listen, do we have the freedom to set aside our own partial or insufficient ideas, our usual habits and ways of seeing things. In this way, we become truly open to accepting a call that can shatter our security, but lead us to a better life. It is not enough that everything be calm and peaceful. God may be offering us something more, but in our comfortable inadvertence, we do not recognize it." (172)

Reflect Is there an area of your life where "repeating what was done in the past" is no longer working? As you seek growth in holiness, implying a change, is there a new way God is asking you to look at this situation?

Read "When, in God's presence, we examine our life's journey, no areas can be off limits. In all aspects of life we can continue to grow and offer something greater to God, even in those areas we find most difficult. We need, though, to ask the Holy Spirit to liberate us and to expel the fear that makes us ban him from certain parts of our lives. God asks everything of us, yet he also gives everything to us. He does not want to enter our lives to cripple or diminish them, but to bring them to fulfilment." (175)

Reflect Is there an area of your life where you find yourself clinging to your way of thinking or doing things? What does it mean for you to give God "everything"? What is holding you back?