



Study and Reflection Guide

Apostolic Exhortation *Joy of the Gospel* *Evangelii Gaudium*

by Pope Francis

Study Guide

Introduction

1. How has Jesus opened his arms to me today? In what way did I respond? How can I allow Jesus to use me as his instrument to help others receive his loving embrace? (nos. 1–3)

“Lord . . . in a thousand ways I have shunned your love. . . . Save me once again, Lord; take me once more into your redeeming embrace.”

2. Which of the Scripture scenes or passages mentioned by the Pope speaks most to my own experience of God and the joy of salvation that God wants to give me? Is anything keeping me from entering into “this great stream of joy”? What is God inviting me to change? (nos. 4–5)

Jesus, let me drink of your Holy Spirit today, so that my own spirit, like Mary’s, may “rejoice in God, my Savior” (Lk 1:47).

3. When I complain to the Lord or to others, do I persist in self-pity and refuse to be encouraged? Or do I use setbacks and perhaps even grief or pain to renew my trust in God? (nos. 6–8)

Lord, I believe in your love for me. I love you too, even when I don’t feel “in love.” May our friendship be what others experience when they meet, work, socialize, pray, or live with me. May it lead them to love you and trust in you.

4. At what three moments in my life did I most deeply feel the happiness, not just the pleasure, of being alive? Was making a gift of myself to at least one other person a part of those experiences? If my faith in Christ is what I cherish most, how would “giving it away” increase its value? How life-giving would that be for me? (nos. 9–10)

Holy Spirit, Lord and Giver of life, help me to risk loving someone in the name of Jesus. May no day end without my having taken the risk to love.

5. How is God making my life new? What remains the same and what changes? How does this dynamic make me more authentically “me”? (nos. 11–13)

Jesus, send me your Holy Spirit to remind me of you and of what you taught, especially in moments when—because of distraction or weakness—I forget. May my heart never forget! May my words and actions remind others of your wisdom and goodness.

6. As I search for God, which of the three settings mentioned by the Synod do I find myself in? If my life has been set on fire by the Holy Spirit, do I see myself and every aspect of my existence in a missionary light? How can I help this “apostolic” sense to grow? (nos. 14–15)

Jesus, you are the “apostle and high priest of our confession” of faith (Heb 3:1), the One sent by the Father and anointed by the Holy Spirit to bring us Good News. Baptized in you, help me to rediscover how I can be a missionary in everything I do. Renew the gift of your Holy Spirit in me. Anoint my words, prayers, and actions, and empower me to bring the world to the Father.

7. How can I best collaborate in the Church’s mission with “enthusiasm and vitality”? Of the seven themes or questions listed by the Pope, which one might God be inviting me to pay special attention to? (nos. 17–18)

Jesus, teach me how to evangelize in every activity I carry out; how to witness to you, the Way, Truth, and Life of humanity.

Chapter 1

The Church’s Missionary Transformation

1. Practically speaking, what would it take for me to step out of my comfort zone and shine the light of the Gospel where it is most needed?

We often hear that we should “think globally, but act locally.” In my dedication to my community or parish, how do I keep before me the “all” whom the Master calls us to love as he does: all the diocese, all the Church, all the world? (nos. 19–23)

Holy Spirit, open me to be surprised by the “unruly freedom of the word” (no. 22) in my own life and in the lives of others.

2. Pope Francis describes several characteristics of the evangelizing community. Think of your parish, a religious organization you belong to, or some other community. Which of the traits Pope Francis describes best characterizes your community? In which area does your community most need growth? How have you contributed to this growth? (no. 24)

Lord, I trust that you will always be creatively faithful in your love for me and for all of us. I commit myself here and now to your Church’s mission of evangelization. I don’t know everything that it will entail, but I know that you will show me every step of the way; you will not fail me. That’s enough for me.

3. How have I been blessed by the ways my parish reaches out to me? How has any other faith group I belong to helped me benefit from my parish’s ministry? How can

I, through my parish, be that kind of blessing for someone else? (nos. 27–29)

Lord, I pray for my parish and its organizations today. May our decisions be channeled, not toward self-preservation, but toward helping others respond positively to your offer of friendship.

4. What three dogmatic, moral, or sacramental teachings of Christianity do I consider to be central to the Church’s life? How different would my life be without them? How can I best keep them before me when I talk with my family or friends, work, shop, vote, listen to music. . . . In short, how can I live as I believe, and share as I believe? (nos. 30–33)

Jesus, Master-Teacher, help me learn from you how to make my life a joyful and persuasive invitation to the peace you give us in the Gospel.

5. When I converse with others about faith, do I know how to agree when I can, listening intelligently and respectfully? Far from settling for the lowest common denominator, drawing others to “concentrate on the essentials, [the] most beautiful, most grand, most appealing and at the same time most necessary” frees me from striving to win an argument and allows truth to persuade in virtue of its own power (nos. 34–37).

Father, send me the Holy Spirit of counsel and knowledge; make me prudent and humble. Help me to treat others with respect.

6. Who are some of the poorest people today? What are they most starving for? How can I become more aware of those “at our door”—those for whom God will ask an accounting? (nos. 46–49)

Jesus, show me what I need to do to have the interior freedom to listen to the cries of the poor and begin to meet their need for you and your Gospel.

Chapter Two

Amid the Crisis of Communal Commitment

1. Why is discernment of spirits and watchfulness of the “signs of the times” important in the Church’s work of evangelization? How does this play out in my efforts to bring the Gospel to others? (nos. 50–51)

Lord, help me to be ever watchful in my day-to-day dealings with other people. May your Spirit guide me in my interactions with others. Help me to discern and choose “movements of the spirit of good” rather than those of the “spirit of evil.”

2. How do I find that I am a part of what Pope Francis calls the “economy of exclusion and inequality” and the “globalization of indifference”? What are some ways that I can withdraw my participation from dehumanizing ways of using and viewing other human persons? (nos. 53–54)

Lord, you created us to live in dignity and give glory to you through all we are and do. I want to see the dignity of others, especially those who are not like me or repulse me in some way. Help me to see your face in each of my brothers and sisters.

3. Pope Francis speaks of the danger of an “idolatry of money” in the economics of the world, and he insists, “Money must serve, not rule!” What is my relationship with money in my personal life? How can money begin to “serve” rather than “rule” in my own life, in my parish, and in the world? (nos. 55–58)

Lord, you tell us in the Scriptures that we cannot serve both God and wealth (see Mt 6:24). Help me to focus my entire being on you. If there is anything in my life that pulls me away from you, help me to change my relationship with it. May the central relationship in my life always be with you, my creator.

4. Pope Francis enumerates many challenges that we face in our world today, some of which are violence, relativism, secularism, challenges to the family, problems of inculturation, and aspects of urban life. As people of faith we are invited to actively engage in evangelization in these areas. What issues in today’s society give you most cause for concern? Which do you feel personally called to address in your evangelization efforts? (nos. 61–75)

Lord, our world faces many difficulties and challenges to maintaining the faith and spreading the Good News. But you are greater than every single problem in our world, and you can overcome any evil. Please help me to discern where I am called to focus my energies and talents. May you always work through me to bring peace and light to others.

5. In the second section of this chapter, Pope Francis details many of the temptations that pastoral workers face in the work of evangelization, including exaggerated individualism, small-mindedness, defeatism, complacency, cliques, infighting, and divisiveness. Among all the temptations mentioned, which one most affects life in my parish? How do these temptations affect me? (nos. 76–101)

Lord, I want to be an effective evangelizer, but some of my habits and ways of thinking drag me down and pull me away from you. Help me to identify what keeps me from becoming more like you. Transform and convert my heart so I can lead others to you.

6. Pope Francis names a few of the ecclesial challenges present today, including the “need to create still broader opportunities for a more incisive female presence in the Church.” What are some ways that my parish or community can recognize the unique feminine genius of women and invite them to roles of leadership? (nos. 102–109)

Lord, you created man and woman with unique gifts, which they each bring to the work of evangelization. We need both men and women evangelizers in our Church and in the world. Help me to develop my own personal gifts as an evangelizer for Christ and help me to recognize and welcome the gifts of others.

Chapter Three

The Proclamation of the Gospel

1. Pope Francis begins this chapter by reminding us of what the Church is: “The Church is sent by Jesus Christ as the sacrament of the salvation offered by God.” The term “sacrament of salvation” is taken from Vatican II’s Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*. It means that the Church itself is a sign of communion with God and

of the unity of the human race (LG 1). What does this mean for my own understanding of the Church as an essential part of God's plan of salvation? (nos. 110–118)

Lord, open my eyes and help me look beyond the external wounds of the Church and see the beauty of its inner reality. You have chosen to act through the Church to pour out the gifts of salvation on us. Help me to be a living and active member of your holy Church.

2. Each of the baptized is called to take part in some way in the Church's evangelizing activity. The Pope uses some examples of people in the New Testament who met Jesus and were profoundly changed. They couldn't help telling other people about him. Am I too on fire to tell others about the love of Jesus in my life? As the Pope asks, "So what are we waiting for?" How can expressions of popular piety (e.g., the rosary, stations of the cross, other devotions, etc.) help us evangelize? (nos. 119–126)

Lord, I thank you for the many ways you have acted in my life, teaching me with your Word and drawing me to the fountain of life. As I meet other people in my daily life, help me to find natural ways of expressing my faith, so as to radiate you to everyone I meet.

3. If I find myself in a situation where I can say a good word or word of faith to someone, do I take advantage of it? Or does something hold me back? If so, how can I grow in my ability to speak in a simple way about my faith in Jesus? (nos. 127–134)

Lord, help me to see the opportunities that arise to speak about you as occasions for joy, not of fear. Perhaps the person I am speaking to has been searching for a long time, and now you want to work through me to draw that person to yourself. Give me the words I need, and the courage to say them.

4. With his characteristic humor, Pope Francis comments that both the laity "and their ordained ministers suffer because of homilies: the laity from having to listen to them and the clergy from having to preach them!" While much of this section is directed to homilists, the laity can also profit from it. In what ways can I strive to listen more deeply to what God is saying through his Word, both in Scripture and as it is preached? (nos. 135–159)

Lord, help me to listen with an open heart to your Word. May I ponder it in my heart, as Mary did, so that it may transform my life.

5. In this final section of the chapter, Pope Francis speaks about how we need to grow in the faith. This includes ongoing instruction and catechesis, as well as aids for spiritual growth. In paragraph 171 he takes a point from Saint Thomas Aquinas, who noted that although a person can have grace and charity, we still have trouble in practicing the virtues. Living a holy life requires an ongoing effort. What virtues in particular do I need, and how can I develop them? (nos. 160–175)

Lord, let me never think that I know enough about the Catholic faith, or that I'm far advanced in the practice of virtue. Help me instead to realize that I can never know enough about you, and give me a desire to keep on growing in my knowledge and love of you and your Word.

Chapter Four

The Social Dimension of Evangelization

1. Pope Francis challenges me to examine whether my relationship with God is limited to “a series of acts aimed solely at easing conscience” or if the Gospel causes me “to desire, seek, and protect the good of others.” How does my daily life witness to God’s reign within me? (nos. 176–185)

My God, give me the insight to recognize the opportunities around me to live out my commitment of faith. Grant me wisdom to work with others to find just and equitable solutions to our social issues, and fill me with the strength and humility to persevere in these efforts. Amen.

2. How do I as an individual and as a member of a parish, living in the larger community, respond to the plea of the poor? Paul VI is quoted as having said: “The more fortunate should renounce some of their rights so as to place their goods more generously at the service of others.” How can I challenge myself to stand with and address the needs of persons around me? (nos. 186–216)

Lord, I join with Pope Francis in praying for politicians and all those entrusted with the issues of justice and the common good. Do not let me give in to the triumph of mere talk, but urge me to action. Lead me to do for others what I can and motivate me to genuine concern for my hungry, thirsty, lonely, naked, sick, and imprisoned brothers and sisters. Amen.

3. Pope Francis tells us that becoming a *people* is “a slow and arduous effort calling for a desire for integration and a willingness to achieve this through the growth of a peaceful and multifaceted culture of encounter.” He also offers four principles essential for developing as a society and for creating a harmony from our differences. How can I apply these principles to the various spheres of my life: family, friendship, employment, parish, culture, civic? (nos. 217–237)

Lord, Good Shepherd, guide me always and in everything with your Good News. May your Spirit keep before me the values of your kingdom, the unity you have called me to embrace, your presence in the world today, and your goodness which graces every person I meet. Make me an instrument of your peace. Amen.

4. To evangelize is to dialogue, but to lay the ground for the Gospel requires the ability as a Christian to speak to believers and non-believers about issues of human development and the common good. How can I enter into dialogue on faith and reason; on the commitment to the Gospel shared with all Christians; on the faith, wisdom, and values gained from Jewish brethren; and on the joys and sorrows common to all people of good will? (nos. 238–258)

My Lord, do you recognize in me a person committed to dialogue with every person I meet? Help me see others as your children, as my brothers and sisters who are in search of peace and progress in this life, as am I. Make me a living witness to the Gospel of Life and Joy by my words, attitudes, and deeds. Amen.

Chapter 5

Spirit-Filled Evangelizers

1. Pope Francis begins this chapter with a reference to the biblical Greek term *parrhesía*. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* defines it as “straightforward simplicity, filial trust, joyous assurance, humble boldness, the certainty of being loved” (no. 2778; see also Acts 4:13). What would happen if everyone in my parish/family/community opened up to this gift of the Spirit? (nos. 259–261)

Divine Holy Spirit, eternal Love of the Father and of the Son, we adore you, we thank you, we love you. Come with your manifold graces and renew the Church. Stir up our hearts. May the confidence of your love impel us to go forth boldly to evangelize everyone we encounter.

2. What are some concrete steps that I can take to grow in love of Jesus? Do I need to spend more time at the feet of the crucifix, or lingering over the Gospel, or touching the face of Jesus in service to the poor? What will help me savor this time spent in Christ’s friendship? (nos. 264–267)

Lord Jesus Christ, you opened the eyes of the blind, healed the deaf, and brought the dead back to life. Heal my senses so that I may perceive you present and active in the Church and in my life. Lead me so that I seek what you seek and love what you love.

3. Pope Francis reminds us that “mission is at once a passion for Jesus and a passion for his people.” Which of these two passions do I feel more naturally? How can I keep these two passions in balance? What does it mean for me to let my life/my parish become *wonderfully complicated* because I/we are open to the needs of the wider world? (nos. 268–274)

Lord, enable me to see how you are present in every person whom I encounter today. Let me reverence and serve you in my brothers and sisters, especially those who live under the same roof with me. Give me compassion and respect for you who are present in the stranger who knocks on my door. Fill all our hearts with the joy of being your sons and daughters—brothers and sisters to one another.

4. Can I talk to God about a time when I’ve been tempted to give up being a witness of the Gospel for lack of results? Where do I find signs of Jesus’s resurrection at work in the world today? How can I cultivate the seeds of hope in the world around me? (nos. 275–283)

Holy Spirit, we entrust ourselves to you who help us in our weakness (see Rom 8:26). Heal our wounds, renew our strength, nourish our spirit. Place us once more on the path of joyful commitment to the Gospel.

5. How do I experience Mary as a gift in my own life of faith? What can I do to cultivate a closer connection to her? Would others be able to discern a Marian “style” to the work of evangelization in my family/parish community? (nos. 284–288)

*“Mary,
Star of the new evangelization,
help us to bear radiant witness to communion,*

*service, ardent and generous faith,
justice and love of the poor,
that the joy of the Gospel
may reach to the ends of the earth,
illuminating even the fringes of our world.
Mother of the living Gospel,
wellspring of happiness for God's little ones,
pray for us.
Amen. Alleluia!"*

— Pope Francis