**Evangelii Gaudium - The Joy of the Gospel**

***[Please note that the references given for quotations are paragraph numbers rather than page numbers]***

***Pope Francis opens the document like this:***

“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. In this Exhortation I wish to encourage the Christian faithful to embark upon **a new chapter of evangelization**marked by this joy, while pointing out new paths for the Church’s journey in years to come” (1)

***What is this new chapter? He goes on to say:***

“I dream of a '**missionary option',** that is, **a missionary impulse capable of transforming everything**, so that the Church’s customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures can be suitably channeled **for the evangelization of today’s world rather than for her self-preservation**” (27).

How do we do this? That’s what the rest of the document is all about.

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**[My] Highlights**

**1. The Basic Proclamation of the Gospel (Kerygma)**

*“In catechesis too, we have rediscovered the fundamental role of the first announcement or kerygma, which needs to be the centre of all evangelizing activity and all efforts at Church renewal… On the lips of the catechist the first proclamation must ring out over and over: “Jesus Christ loves you; he gave his life to save you; and now he is living at your side every day to enlighten, strengthen and free you” (164).*

*“It is first in a qualitative sense because it is the principal proclamation, the one which we must hear again and again in different ways, the one which we must announce one way or another throughout the process of catechesis, at every level and moment” (164).*

We can evangelize only because God first loved us:

*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 unfailingly 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).*

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.

And we evangelise because we recognise this love:

*“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?” (9).*

**Where should we preach the Gospel?**

*In fidelity to the example of the Master, it is vitally important for the Church today to go forth and preach the Gospel to all: to all places, on all occasions, without hesitation, reluctance or fear. The joy of the Gospel is for all people: no one can be excluded.” (23).*

**Missionary Disciple**

The term “missionary disciple” is used throughout the document. The two terms are used to hold in tension the need both for a relationship with our Lord and the need to go outside to preach the Gospel. One thing is very clear. ***Every Baptized member of the Catholic faith is called to evangelize and is called to be a missionary disciple.***

*“In virtue of their baptism,* ***all the members of the People of God have become missionary disciples*** *(cf. Mt 28:19).* ***All the baptized****, whatever their position in the Church or their level of instruction in the faith,* ***are agents of evangelization"*** *(120).*

*“What I would like to propose is something much more in the line of an evangelical discernment. It is the approach of a missionary disciple, an approach ‘nourished by the light and strength of the Holy Spirit’” (51).*

*“The Church is herself a missionary disciple” (40)*

*“To be evangelizers of souls, we need to develop a spiritual taste for being close to people’s lives and to discover that this is itself a source of greater joy. To be Mission is at once a passion for Jesus and a passion for his people” (268).*

*“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.” (24)*

**The Parish**

“*In* ***all its activities*** *the parish encourages and trains its members to be evangelizers. It is a community of communities, a sanctuary where the thirsty come to drink in the midst of their journey, and* ***a centre of constant missionary outreach****. We must admit, though, that the call to review and renew our parishes has not yet sufficed to bring them nearer to people, to make them environments of living communion and participation, and to make them completely mission-oriented” (28)*

*“In some people we see an* ***ostentatious preoccupation for the liturgy****, for doctrine and for the Church’s prestige, but* ***without any concern that the Gospel have a******real impact*** *on God’s faithful people and the concrete needs of the present time” (95).*

Then in regard to sharing the message of the Gospel:

*“Pastoral ministry in a missionary style is not obsessed with the disjointed transmission of a multitude of doctrines to be insistently imposed…****the message has to concentrate on the essentials****, on what is most beautiful, most grand, most appealing and at the same time most necessary.* ***The message is simplified, while losing none of its depth and truth, and thus becomes all the more forceful and convincing****.” (35)*

**The Poor**

We know that *“evangelization would not be complete if it did not take account of the unceasing interplay of the Gospel and of man’s concrete life, both personal and social” (181).*

*Each individual Christian and every community is called to be an instrument of God for the liberation and promotion of the poor, and for enabling them to be fully a part of society (187).*

*Inspired by this, the Church has made an option for the poor which is understood as a “special form of primacy in the exercise of Christian charity, to which the whole tradition of the Church bears witness” (198).*

*“God’s heart has a special place for the poor, so much so that he himself 'became poor' (2 Cor 8:9). The entire history of our redemption is marked by the presence of the poor. Salvation came to us from the 'yes' uttered by a lowly maiden from a small town on the fringes of a great empire.” (197)*

*“Without the preferential option for the poor, ‘the proclamation of the Gospel, which is itself the prime form of charity, risks being misunderstood or submerged by the ocean of words which daily engulfs us in today’s society of mass communications’” (199)*

**What’s your four o’clock?**

*“The joy of evangelizing always arises from grateful remembrance: it is a grace which we constantly need to implore. The apostles never forgot the moment when Jesus touched their hearts: 'It was about four o’clock in the afternoon'" (Jn. 1:39) (13).*

**On patience**

*“Evangelization consists mostly of patience and disregard for constraints of time” (24).*

**On Atheism**

*Today, our challenge is not so much atheism as the need to respond adequately to many people’s thirst for God, lest they try to satisfy it with alienating solutions or with a disembodied Jesus who demands nothing of us with regard to others.*

**Pastoral Workers**

“It is striking that even some who clearly have solid doctrinal and spiritual convictions frequently fall into a lifestyle which leads to an attachment to financial security, or to a desire for power or human glory at all cost, rather than giving their lives to others in mission. Let us not allow ourselves to be robbed of missionary enthusiasm!” (80)

Some fall into it because they throw themselves into unrealistic projects and are not satisfied simply to do what they reasonably can. Others, because they lack the patience to allow processes to mature; they want everything to fall from heaven. Others, because they are attached to a few projects or vain dreams of success. Others, because they have lost real contract with people and so depersonalize their work that they are more concerned with the road map than with the journey itself (82).

**Women**

“*Demands that the legitimate rights of women be respected, based on the firm conviction that men and women are equal in dignity, present the Church with profound and challenging questions which cannot be lightly evaded. The reservation of the priesthood to males, as a sign of Christ the Spouse who gives himself in the Eucharist, is not a question open to discussion, but it can prove especially divisive if sacramental power is too closely identified with power in general.” (104)*

*I readily acknowledge that many women share pastoral responsibilities with priests, helping to guide people, families, and groups and offering new contributions to theological reflection. But we need to create still broader opportunities for a more incisive female presence in the Church”(103)*

**The young**

*“Even if it is not always easy to approach young people, progress has been made in two areas: the awareness that the entire community is called to evangelize and educate the young, and the urgent need for the young to exercise greater leadership.” (106)*

Kate Williamson 15.9.14