



## Evangelii Gaudium: The Joy of the Gospel

*Pope Francis*

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Date : Published January 1st 2014 by Word Among Us Press (first published January 1st 2013)

ISBN : 9781593252625

Author : Pope Francis

Format : Paperback 221 pages

Genre : Religion, Theology, Nonfiction, Christianity, Catholic, Spirituality, Christian, Faith

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## From Reader Review *Evangelii Gaudium: The Joy of the Gospel* for online ebook

### David says

This book, Pope Francis' first encyclical was a joy to read (pun intended). Francis reflects on the importance of the gospel of Jesus from numerous angles. I can't imagine a person reading this book and not being motivated to do something. As someone who is non-Catholic, I probably agreed with 95% of the stuff here. Highly recommended not just for Catholics, though all Catholics should read it, but for all Christians.

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### J.T. Therrien says

Compared to Pope Francis' first encyclical, the 25 page *Lumen Fidei*, this Apostolic Exhortation was much longer, coming in at 225 pages. But there are treasures to be found on every page!

In *Evangelii Gaudium*, Pope Francis calls for a rebirth of the New Evangelization. He wants Catholics to take seriously their baptismal missionary promise to be apostles and to go out and proclaim the news that Christ died for us and that He is alive in our modern world.

Pope Francis explains the new direction for his vision of the Church's laity and pastors as they go about the business of being Catholics. There is much to discuss in this lengthy document, but the important thing to notice is how Pope Francis continues to place the poor and the disenfranchised at the center of the Catholic Church's concerns.

Pope Francis exhorts all of us to treat each other (Catholics, non-Catholics, and non-Christians) with love and respect for personal dignity, to learn from our cultural differences, and to be pastoral leaders.

This is an amazing Papal entreaty. Well worth taking the time to read.

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### James says

Like many outside of the Catholic faith, I am a great admirer of the current pope. Francis was elected upon Pope Benedict XVI's retirement in 2013. When he chose the name Francis (after the 12th Century Franciscan founder) and wowed the world with his simple, generous lifestyle, many have seen fresh winds of change blowing in Rome. In terms of theology, he is not significantly different from his predecessors. He lacks Benedict's keen theological acumen (no insult here, Ratzinger is brilliant!); however here is a pope who is pastorally sensitive and attentive to those on the margins. If there are indeed winds of change blowing in the Catholic church, it is one of tone.

This is what makes *Evangelii Gaudium* (*The Joy of the Gospel*) so refreshing (yes I know it has been out a while and I'm late to the party). This is his second encyclical (though his first is regarded as largely Benedict's work). Reading as an outsider, I hear the importance this pope places on gospel proclamation, that

the church and all the faithful are given the missional responsibility of making disciples. He also stresses that the church and its ministers need to be thoughtful about how best to engage in the work of evangelization—that this involves holistic mission and care for the poor, as well as thoughtful ecumenical and inter-religious dialogue. While many of his examples (and source material) make the most sense to the Catholic faithful, those of us in the other ‘ecclesial communions’ will also find in Francis an appropriate challenge toward holistic, generous and joyful proclamation.

Much of what Francis says here is rooted in *Lumen Gentium* (Light of Nations) from the Dogmatic Constitution of Vatican II. Francis speaks to the following issues:

- a) the reform of the Church in her missionary outreach;
- b) the temptations faced by pastoral workers;
- c) the Church, understood as the entire People of God which evangelizes;
- d) the homily and its preparation;
- e) the inclusion of the poor in society;
- f) peace and dialogue within society
- g) the spiritual motivations for missions (17)

These seven topics give shape to the Pope’s discourse (notice that the alleged economic preoccupation of the Pope is couched and made subservient to the larger question of Christian mission). Reading as a Protestant, I found I could affirm much of what is said here. I still have many points of theological contention (such as the authority of the pope, differences on ecclesiology and soteriology) but this is such a generous and magnanimous presentation so I don’t much feel like fighting with the pope. As a preaching pastor I especially loved his words about homily preparation (145-159). As an advocate for mission with justice, I think this is a rich resource for us (especially 176-257).

Yet as I said above, what I appreciate most is tone. This is a book about the joy: joy in Christ through the church. Proclamation is not the main papal imperative here. Joyful proclamation is. Francis calls us back to the idea that the gospel—good news!—is joyful:

There are Christians whose lives seem like Lent without Easter. I realize of course that joy is not expressed the same way at all times in life, especially at moments of great difficulty. Joy adapts and changes, but it always endures, even as a flicker of light born of our personal certainty that, when everything is said and done, we are infinitely loved. I understand the grief of people who have to endure great suffering, yet slowly but surely we all have to let the joy of faith slowly revive as a quiet yet firm trust, even amid the greatest distress: “My soul is bereft of peace; I have forgotten what happiness is . . . But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope: the steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning. Great is your faithfulness . . . It is good that one should wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord” (Lam 3:17,21-23,26) (paragraph 6).

I have heard too many ex-Catholics bemoan their Catholic guilt. I have heard far too much from somber saints. How nice to hear a robust ode to Catholic Joy! Well done Papa Frank! 5 Stars.

Notice of material connection: I received this free from the publisher in exchange for my honest review!

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### **Darryl says**

I loved this exhortation by Pope Francis! He presents the joy of sharing the gospel with the world. This is a worthwhile read. The Pope presents what the keygma consists of, and how the gospel must be shared in word and action.

I highlighted many points in the exhortation which I will come back to over and over again, as I seek to be missional in my life and work.

Read this!!

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### **John Rudd says**

Let Pope Francis speak for himself: "I prefer a Church which is bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been out on the streets, rather than a Church which is unhealthy from being confined and from clinging to its own security. I do not want a Church concerned with being at the centre and which then ends by being caught up in a web of obsessions and procedures. If something should rightly disturb us and trouble our consciences, it is the fact that so many of our brothers and sisters are living without the strength, light and consolation born of friendship with Jesus Christ, without a community of faith to support them, without meaning and a goal in life. More than by fear of going astray, my hope is that we will be moved by the fear of remaining shut up within structures which give us a false sense of security, within rules which make us harsh judges, within habits which make us feel safe, while at our door people are starving and Jesus does not tire of saying to us: "Give them something to eat" (Mk 6:37)."

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### **Daniel Clark says**

A very nice look at evangelism. The first and final chapters build a theological framework and the middle sections discuss the realities of evangelism including both the challenges and joys. What I really appreciated that Pope Francis was able to talk openly about the challenges of the day but was not overcome with fear as many do when they go on and on about how bad the world is. The Pope offers another way to look at it. Things are different and not necessarily bad. I wish in the middle sections that there were concrete examples to what he was saying, but he was trying to cover many topics in a short time. The beauty of the book is to look at evangelism not as a way to build our numbers or anything selfless like that, but evangelism as increasing the fruits of the Spirit. My edition also includes a study guide for reflection and discussion. This has me excited to read his latest book on Mercy that I have already purchased.

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### **Dhanaraj Rajan says**

I loved reading this Apostolic Exhortation of Pope Francis.

The theme is quite obvious from the title itself - It is a Missiological statement.

The proclamation of Gospel in Today's world should begin with understanding of the present day context. And Pope does exactly that by beginning the document with the analysis of the contemporary society and the possible dangers that could be faced by the committed evangelizers.

This then is followed by the address of proclaiming the Good News. Here, he clearly states that each Christian who has encountered Christ cannot but take the joy experienced to the others. Thus, he makes it very clear that there is no difference between a simple Christian and a trained missionary. Also he breaks the hierarchical aspect of the Church. Each one is equal in dignity by virtue of the Baptism received. And each one is a missionary taking the joy of the Gospel to the others.

He writes: **"Every Christian is challenged, here and now, to be actively engaged in evangelization; indeed, anyone who has truly experienced God's saving love does not need much time or lengthy training to go out and proclaim that love. Every Christian is missionary to the extent that he or she has encountered the love of God in Christ Jesus: we no longer say that we are 'disciples' and 'missionaries', but rather that we are always 'missionary disciples'."**

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### **Jonathan Drnjevic says**

There is NO DOUBT that Pope Francis represents the best of Christian Leaders in the world today. This book might well be a devotional and contains great wisdom for all.

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### **7jane says**

(in my book version, afterword is by James Martin SJ)

Another good book from Pope Francis, this time about the joy of the Gospel, and the evangelization of it. Even me as an introvert layperson can find information and inspiration in this. This is a call to action, to a life of faith, and thus responding to God's love for us in the way that fits within our cultures' variations. The joy of the Gospel, and the message it spreads is: Jesus has risen! This is the #1 reason, and the one to spread in the world.

It is important to serve God and love his creation, and renew our interest in getting close to Jesus (again). It is quite easy to get tangled in the dangerous mess of worries and pursuits of the world, forgetting the joy one has learned. This joy is a firm, quite trust, even amid the greatest distresses in our lives. Looking at Jesus gives us direction.

There is a need of evangelization - to go outside our familiar comfort zones of faith, to be open to seekers. This goes both for the people of the Church and the laypeople. We should be inspired to move beyond "we have always done it this way", towards bolder creativity of approaching people. The poor and the sick should be among the first of our concern. (Francis lists a number of challengers in today's world for evangelization in one chapter, and ways to make a good homily - and doing catechesis work - in another part.)

We shouldn't be shunning good ways of popular piety (pilgrimages, rosary, candles, adoration). And we should frequently look into the nourishing, strengthening world of God's word. It is also good to keep in my how

we treat others, for that comes back on us later. The global and the local worlds should work in harmony. And it is important to work on including the poor in society, cultivating peace and social dialogue.

The things that help us in our various levels of evangelization include a good prayer life, a good relationship with Jesus, and loving others. Mary is also our help in this work. The point about mercy pops up in the book, and is worked on wider in other books (interesting).

In the end, I can say that while the book started slowly, it picked up on inspiring ideas as it went on, and the end poem tied up things very nicely. The first echos of the Year of Mercy seem to appear already; and even if some parts are directed mostly to certain people (fe. people who give homilies in Churches and such), even the more introverted people can get ideas on how to give evangelization, even if just in living one's life in Christian faith, as an example. Great read.

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### **Fr. River says**

Feb. 25, "Harmony and Humility" And a Review of The Joy of the Gospel by Pope Francis

Mk. 9:30-37 St. Walburga

Being first nor last is not what is important. Sharing our gifts with humanity. Pope Francis writes a great book in his "Joy of the Gospel".

He calls us to: . Move outside the doors of the building and be in the streets; calls us to give of our goods so that all may have--he condemns an economy based on wealth; he calls us to be inclusive in our relationships with all religions and he calls the laity to work for changes in the general church from the bottom. It is an excellent book with a message for the Church.

Tonight as I gave out food and talked to kids I thought of Jesus feeding the thousands and how this is where I belong in ministry. My life has moved from seeing myself in a prestigious church, with money, to simply being poor and walking with the lowest of the low; from caring what people think, to frankly not giving a damn--I simply want to serve, to care. Insults, contempt come--but with it there is much joy in the work in looking in the faces of 17 year old's like Alex and giving him food, and some socks, and talking to him and seeing the joy in his eyes. Deo Gratias! Thanks be to God!

### VegInspiration

Veganism is the essence of inclusiveness and nonviolence: seeing sacred beings when we see others, never reducing them to objects or commodities for our use.

It is the ancient wisdom of the interconnectedness of the welfare of all, and is also the dawning mentality that is foundational to sustainability, freedom, and lasting peace. Our children's world will be vegan, or the

alternative is unpleasant to contemplate. Dr. Will Tuttle

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### **Sarah (Gutierrez) Myers says**

From the pope's letter, "Evangelii Gaudium (The Joy of the Gospel)": "It is impossible to persevere in a fervent evangelization unless we are convinced from personal experience that it is not the same thing to have known Jesus as not to have known him, not the same thing to walk with him as to walk blindly, not the same thing to hear his word as not to know it, and not the same thing to contemplate him, to worship him, to find our peace in him, as not to. It is not the same thing to try to build the world with his Gospel as to try to do so by our own lights. We know well that with Jesus life becomes richer and that with him it is easier to find meaning in everything. This is why we evangelize."

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### **Simoa says**

Pope Francis: prophet, scholar. This book is revolutionary because it is so accessible. He connects Christ and evangelization to our work and personal lives, to matters of politics and justice. Christ belongs to neither conservative nor liberal schools of thought, but to the poor, the outcast, the abandoned. An authentic faith privileges the least of these because that's where Jesus said He would be, and also because their humanity is ours. I will be revisiting this. So glad I underlined as many passages as I did. AND he ended it with reflections on Mary, and how crucial she is to the church's mission. Our feminine icon.

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### **Steven R. McEvoy says**

I really loved this book while reading it. But as I prepared to write a review I kept asking myself number of questions:

Who am I to judge a book by Pope Francis?

Who do I review a papal letter?

As well as many other questions. But I came to the conclusion that by engaging the writings of Pope Francis I was deeply challenged by this work, and other writings of Pope Francis. For a while now I have been struggling with and praying to live more joy. I do not want to be the grumpy old man sitting on the porch yelling at kids, like Clint Eastwood in the movie Gran Torino. And realizing I do not exude joy and happiness I thought this Apostolic Exhortation would be a good place to begin. And to be honest it has been in my to read pile since before it came out.

This edition of this book has a forward by Bishop Robert Baron, whose works I am very familiar with and respect. And an afterward by James Martin SJ who I am much less familiar with. But the key player is Pope Francis himself. Now to share a personal story, my wife is not Catholic, she comes to church with the kids and I, but she is not Catholic. Around the time this book came out there was a photo that went viral of the pope hugging a disfigured man. The man has neurofibromatosis, a condition that my son has been diagnosed with. My wife had an appreciation for Pope Francis, but after that photo went viral he held a close spot in her

heart. My wife shared the photo saying that this is what our son has, and she can only hope if his goes active that he is as respected and cared about.

Now to be honest I started this book a few times, and never finished it. Then recently I picked it up and read it through. I do not believe that anyone can read this book and not be touched. Readers will be challenged to grow in joy by encounters with Jesus, and through that joy to witness to the world. This is a call to love and be loved. To be transformed by the power of Jesus and through that transformation to be a tool to the world. If we are Jesus hands, feet and mouth in the world, then this book shows us the importance of living a good witness, but also calls us out of our comfort zone.

I read this book after starting a new job. Each day I pray to live more joy, and to do good work for God. In my new role I can also walk to noon hour mass at the University I went to. Both a co-worker and my boss have found out I do so and have shown interest in coming to mass. And I attribute their attraction to weekday mass to the changes this book are helping to happen in me.

If you want to keep going through life living day in and day out as you are then do not read this book. But if you are open to being challenged, moves, stirred and likely even made uncomfortable then this book is for you. It is an excellent read and I really wish I had read it sooner.

Read the review on my blog Book Reviews and More.

(Note: This book is part of a series of reviews: A Year of Reading Intention - Catholic Reading!)

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### **Ellen says**

So glad I finally read this. I had been meaning to do so since it was written and after struggling with the pdf format online, bought it in print. Very heavy and not something that should be used for bedtime reading, but also meaningful and enjoyable.

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### **booklady says**

In *Evangelii Gaudium* or *The Joy of the Gospel*, Pope Francis continues to establish himself as a follower of Christ who defies easy categorization and thus manipulation by any known group either within or outside the established church. So far, Pope Francis seems very unconcerned with impressing anyone. Rather, he's very determined—like his brown-robed, bare-footed name-sake—to get down to the business of rejoicing in '*the Gospel, radiant with glory of Christ's cross.*' (And yet as of today, March 13, 2014, the 1st anniversary of his pontificate, his first solo document is the bestselling text since the documents of Vatican II as reported here.)

He invites each of us '*to a renewed personal encounter with Jesus Christ, or at least an openness to letting him encounter*' us, while acknowledging there are Christians whose lives seem like Lent without Easter.

In spite of the lack of interest papal documents attract these days, the state of things is such that Pope Francis must advance the cause for pastoral and missionary conversion. He believes in the local parish as a

powerhouse for creativity and self-renewal, but also writes,

‘This presumes that it (the local parish) really is in contact with the homes and the lives of its people, and does not become a useless structure out of touch with people or a self-absorbed group made up of a few. The parish is the presence of the Church in a given territory, an environment for hearing God’s word, for growth in the Christian life, for dialogue, proclamation, charitable outreach, worship and celebration. 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 center 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.’

The full document can be read [here](#).

There is so much good information in this Apostolic Exhortation and all are highly encouraged to read it. However, for those not inclined to read, they can also see what the Holy Father writes lived out in his papal ministry. He truly does ‘preach with his actions’ only using words as/when necessary.

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### **Philip says**

This lengthy letter from Pope Francis is brilliant.

He calls for believers to be transformed by their encounters with Jesus and joyfully share their faith with others.

Francis urges us to draw closer to God through the sacraments, prayerful reading of Scripture, Eucharistic adoration and a dynamic relationship with Mary, our mother and model. He urges us to pursue a fruitful balance between prayer and missionary works. Don't worry, reading the letter is much more exciting and inspiring than reading my bland description here.

This letter has attracted a lot of attention because Francis urges us to reject the new idolatry of money, and act with concern for the poor. He criticizes economic systems that perpetrate injustice. Some people have read this as a blanket condemnation of capitalism, but a close reading reveals that Francis is much more discerning than that.

While some people have characterized this letter as a sign that Francis, and perhaps the Church, is lurching leftward, I believe they are simply mistaken. It is important to note that much of the letter is focused on how people can live the Gospel in a way that will lead others to want to experience the love of God. This is, in essence, a spiritual letter. It does contain a lengthy section that examines a variety of economic and social issues that affect the contemporary world. Yet it seems to me that this section is very much in line with what other popes have published, beginning with *Rerum Novarum* and extending to encyclicals by John Paul II and Benedict that addressed various social and economic issues. Beyond that, anyone who has read the Gospel will not be surprised to find that Francis is very concerned about the poor, and the threat of a "globalization of indifference."

FYI - This letter will soon be available in book form, but is already available (for free!) on the Vatican's website.

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### **Peggy says**

Read as part of a Lent study group. Much has been written about Francis, and about this apostolic exhortation. Despite having followed the news and commentary, I was blown away by the actual document. It is much more radical, uncomfortable, uplifting, and agitating than I thought. It's also a good read - the writing is accessible but still requires something of the reader. How lovely to be spoken to by the Pope as if we were adults, capable of forming consciences. But how scary that we are so very clearly called to leave our comfort zone and actually be the People of God.

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### **Allen says**

Readable, thought provoking, challenging, teaching - every page contains wisdom. It sat on my shelf way too long; happy that I finally cracked it open.

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### **Alexis Finnell says**

Pope Francis speaks straight to my heart in so many ways

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### **Carmen Hartono says**

Rarely do I read a book from cover to cover while finding something totally new on each page. With this book, Pope Francis exemplifies the title, The Joy of the Good News. I found a refreshing new idea expressed in each new paragraph. I literally savored every page.

As I see it, Francis took the Catechism of the Catholic Church and brought it to life.

Chapter One can be seen as the Creed transformed from being the Heart of the Gospel into Our Mother Church on a Mission. In Chapter Two, Francis challenges us to raise our standard of morality.

With Chapter Three, Our Pope instructs us to live the sacraments. Chapter Four is his own personal prayer for a more inclusive reality within the church. Where I thought Chapter Five would summarize his thoughts, I was pleasantly surprised to find a refreshing new view of mariology.

I highly recommend this book to everyone, Catholic or not.

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