Evangelii Gaudium!

The Joy of the Gospel, Part 4
Pope Francis’ New Apostolic Exhortation
by Bryan Reising

This is the last installment of this apostolic exhortation by Pope Francis. The following are some excerpts, some gems I found in reading this document. Let us continue to explore this apostolic exhortation:

On Spirit-filled evangelizers

“Spirit-filled evangelizers mean evangelizers fearlessly open to the working of the Holy Spirit. At Pentecost, the Spirit made the apostles go forth from themselves and turned them into heralds of God’s wondrous deeds, capable of speaking to each person in his or her own language. The Holy Spirit also grants the courage to proclaim the newness of the Gospel with boldness (parrhesía) in every time and place, even when it meets with opposition. Let us call upon him today, firmly rooted in prayer, for without prayer all our activity risks being fruitless and our message empty. Jesus wants evangelizers who proclaim the good news not only with words, but above all by a life transfigured by God’s presence…

…Spirit-filled evangelization is not the same as a set of tasks dutifully carried out despite one’s own personal inclinations and wishes. How I long to find the right words to stir up enthusiasm for a new chapter of evangelization full of fervor, joy, generosity, courage, boundless love, and attraction! Yet I realize that no words of encouragement will be enough unless the fire of the Holy Spirit burns in our hearts. A spirit-filled evangelization is one guided by the Holy Spirit, for he is the soul of the Church called to proclaim the Gospel. Before offering some spiritual motivations and suggestions, I once more invoke the Holy Spirit. I implore him to come and renew the Church, to stir and impel her to go forth boldly to evangelize all peoples.” (EG, 259-261)

On the personal encounter with Christ

“The primary reason for evangelizing is the love of Jesus which we have received, the experience of salvation which urges us to ever greater love of him. What kind of love would not feel the need to speak of the beloved, to point him out, to make him known? 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. Standing before him with open hearts, letting him look at us, we see that gaze of love which Nathaniel glimpsed on the day when Jesus said to him: ‘I saw you under the fig tree’ (Jn 1:48). How good it is to stand before a crucifix, or on our knees before the Blessed Sacrament, and simply to be in his presence! How much good it does us when he once more touches our lives and impels us to share his new life! What then happens is that ‘we speak of what we have seen and heard’ (1 Jn 1:3).

The best incentive for sharing the Gospel comes from contemplating it with love, lingering over its pages, and reading it with the heart. If we approach it in this way, its beauty will amaze and constantly excite us. But if this is to come about, we need to recover a contemplative spirit which can help us to realize ever anew that we have been entrusted with a treasure which makes us more human and helps us to lead a new life. There is nothing more precious which we can give to others.” (EG, 264)

On the spiritual savior of being a people

“The word of God also invites us to recognize that we are a people: ‘Once you were no people but now you are God’s people’ (1 Pet 2:10). 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. Mission is at once a passion for Jesus and a passion for his people. When we stand before Jesus crucified, we see the depth of his love which exalts and sustains us, but at the same time, unless we are blind, we begin to realize that Jesus’ gaze, burning with love, expands to embrace all his people. We realize once more that he wants to make use of us to draw closer to his beloved people. He takes us from the midst of his people and he sends us to his people; without this sense of belonging we cannot understand our deepest identity.” (EG, 268)

“Jesus himself is the model of this method of evangelization which brings us to the very heart of his people. How good it is for us to contemplate the closeness which he shows to everyone! If he speaks to someone, he looks into their eyes with deep love and concern: ‘Jesus, looking upon him, loved him’ (Mk 10:21). We see how accessible he is, as he draws near the blind man (cf. Mk 10:46-52) and eats and drinks with sinners (cf. Mk 2:16) without worrying about being thought a glutton and a drunkard himself (cf. Mt 11:19). We see his sensitivity in allowing a sinful woman to anoint his feet (cf. Lk 7:36-50) and in receiving Nicodemus by night (cf. Jn 3:1-15). Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross is nothing else than the culmination of the way he lived his entire life. Moved by his example, we want to enter fully into the fabric of society, sharing the lives of all, listening to their concerns, helping them materially and spiritually in their needs, rejoicing with those who rejoice, weeping with those who weep; arm in arm with others, we are committed to building a new world. But we do so not from a sense of obligation, not as a burdensome duty, but as the result of a personal decision which brings us joy and gives meaning to our lives.” (EG, 269)

“It is true that in our dealings with the world, we are told to give reasons for our hope, but not as an enemy who critiques and condemns. We are told quite clearly: ‘do so with gentleness and reverence’ (1 Pet 3:15) and ‘if possible, so far as it depends upon you, live peaceably with all’ (Rom 12:18). We are also told to overcome ‘evil with good’ (Rom 12:21) and to ‘work for the good of all’ (Gal 6:10). Far from trying to appear better than others, we should ‘in humility count others better’ than ourselves (Phil 2:3). The Lord’s apostles themselves enjoyed ‘favor with all the people’ (Acts 2:47; 4:21, 33; 5:13). Clearly Jesus does not want us to be grandees who look down upon others, but men and women of the people. This is not an idea of the Pope, or one pastoral option among others; they are injunctions contained in the word of God which is so clear, direct, and convincing that they need no interpretations which might diminish their power to challenge us. Let us live them sine glossa, without commentaries. By so doing we will know the missionary joy of sharing life with God’s faithful people as we strive to light a fire in the heart of the world” (EG, 271)

“When we live out a spirituality of drawing nearer to others and seeking their welfare, our hearts are opened wide to the Lord’s greatest and most beautiful gifts. Whenever we encounter another person in love, we learn something new about God. Whenever our eyes are opened to acknowledge the other, we grow in the light of faith and knowledge of God. If we want to advance in the spiritual life, then, we must constantly be missionaries. The work of evangelization enriches the mind and the heart; it opens up spiritual horizons; it makes us more and more sensitive to the workings of the Holy Spirit, and it takes us beyond our limited spiritual constructs. A committed missionary knows the joy of being a spring which spills over and refreshes others. Only the person who feels happiness in seeking the good of others, in desiring their happiness, can be a missionary.” (EG, 272)

On the mysterious working of the risen Christ and his Spirit

“Christ’s resurrection is not an event of the past; it contains a vital power which has permeated this world. Where all seems to be dead, signs of the resurrection suddenly spring up. It is an irresistible force. Often it seems that God does not exist: all around us we see persistent injustice, evil, indifference, and cruelty. But it is also true that in the midst of darkness something new always springs to life and sooner or later produces fruit.” (EG, 276)

“Keeping our missionary fervor alive calls for firm trust in the Holy Spirit, for it is he who ‘helps us in our weakness’ (Rom 8:26). But this generous trust has to be nourished, and so we need to invoke the Spirit constantly. He can heal whatever causes us to flag in the missionary endeavor. It is true that this trust in the unseen can cause us to feel disoriented: it is like being plunged into the deep and not knowing what we will find. I myself have frequently experienced this. Yet there is no greater freedom than that of allowing oneself to be guided by the Holy Spirit, renouncing the attempt to plan and control everything to the last detail, and instead letting him enlighten, guide, and direct us, leading us wherever he wills. The Holy Spirit knows well what is needed in every time and place. This is what it means to be mysteriously fruitful!” (EG, 280)
On the missionary power of intercessory prayer

“One form of prayer moves us particularly to take up the task of evangelization and to seek the good of others: it is the prayer of intercession. Let us peer for a moment into the heart of Saint Paul, to see what his prayer was like. It was full of people: ‘...I constantly pray with you in every one of my prayers for all of you... because I hold you in my heart’ (Phil 1:4, 7). Here we see that intercessory prayer does not divert us from true contemplation, since authentic contemplation always has a place for others. (EG, 281)

“This attitude becomes a prayer of gratitude to God for others. ‘First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you’ (Rom 1:8). It is constant thankfulness: ‘I give thanks to God always for you because of the grace of God which was given you in Christ Jesus’ (1 Cor 1:4); ‘I thank my God in all my remembrance of you’ (Phil 1:3). Far from being suspicious, negative, and despairing, it is a spiritual gaze born of deep faith which acknowledges what God is doing in the lives of others. At the same time, it is the gratitude which flows from a heart attentive to others. When evangelizers rise from prayer, their hearts are more open; freed of self-absorption, they are desirous of doing good and sharing their lives with others.” (EG, 282)

On Mary

“With the Holy Spirit, Mary is always present in the midst of the people. She joined the disciples in praying for the coming of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:14) and thus made possible the missionary outburst which took place at Pentecost. She is the Mother of the Church which evangelizes, and without her we could never truly understand the spirit of the new evangelization.” (EG, 284)

“On the cross, when Jesus endured in his own flesh the dramatic encounter of the sin of the world and God’s mercy, he could feel at his feet the consoling presence of his mother and his friend. At that crucial moment, before fully accomplishing the work which his Father had entrusted to him, Jesus said to Mary: ‘Woman, here is your son.’ Then he said to his beloved friend: ‘Here is your mother’ (Jn 19:26-27). These words of the dying Jesus are not chiefly the expression of his devotion and concern for his mother; rather, they are a revelatory formula which manifests the mystery of a special saving mission. Jesus left us his mother to be our mother. Only after doing so did Jesus know that ‘all was now finished’ (Jn 19:28). At the foot of the cross, at the supreme hour of the new creation, Christ led us to Mary. He brought us to her because he did not want us to journey without a mother, and our people read in this maternal image all the mysteries of the Gospel. The Lord did not want to leave the Church without this icon of womanhood. Mary, who brought him into the world with great faith, also accompanies ‘the rest of her offspring, those who keep the commandments of God and bear testimony to Jesus’ (Rev 12:17). The close connection between Mary, the Church, and each member of the faithful, based on the fact that each in his or her own way brings forth Christ, has been beautifully expressed by Blessed Isaac of Stella: ‘In the inspired Scriptures, what is said in a universal sense of the virgin mother, the Church, is understood in an individual sense of the Virgin Mary... In a way, every Christian is also believed to be a bride of God’s word, a mother of Christ, his daughter and sister, at once virginal and fruitful... Christ dwelt for nine months in the tabernacle of Mary’s womb. He dwells until the end of the ages in the tabernacle of the Church’s faith. He will dwell forever in the knowledge and love of each faithful soul.’” (EG, 285)

Pope Francis goes on to share how Mary is the Star of Evangelization and concludes with an intercessory prayer to Mary.

To read the entire document, go to:


UPCOMING OPPORTUNITIES

PCL Gatherings
9:00 gather; 9:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.
Thur, Feb 15
PCL Retreat – Langetree Duck Farm. Please RSVP by Wednesday morning, February 14, 2018 using the Eventbrite link provided in the invitation email from Joseph.
Thur, March 22  
Fundamentals of the RCIA by Luisa Negret and Twyla Satterthwaite; sponsored by Pflaum – Diocesan Pastoral Center

Thur, April 19  
Curriculum Day–sponsored by the diocese - Diocesan Pastoral Center, Beaumont

Thur, May 12  
End of year Gathering  
Sponsored by Loyola Press at the Diocesan Pastoral Center, Beaumont

Parish Visits  
Bryan has been on the road starting last July for some parish visits. He can visit on the day of your Faith Formation. Or he can do visits with pastors and catechetical leaders. Please arrange a time that you can invite him to your parish by contacting him via email: breising@dioceseofbmt.org or calling his office at 409-924-4323. He will not get to all places during the catechetical year, but he would like to get to all regions of the diocese.

What will happen with these visits? The following are some possibilities: an observation of your faith formation during the time of instruction, perhaps an in-service with your catechists, or even a catechetical presentation – guest catechist for adults, youth, or children.

RCIA in the Diocese of Beaumont  
TeamRCIA rescheduled their Making Disciples Institute for Friday, April 13, 2018 and Saturday, April 14, 2018 at the Church of St. Jude Thaddeus in Beaumont. For further information and to sign up: https://www.dobgifts.org/events/making-disciples/

In addition, April 13, 2018, TeamRCIA will give presentations for our priests and deacons. This will be from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. at the church of St. Jude. Please contact Bryan Reising at 409-924-4323 or email breising@dioceseofbmt.org for further information and registration. Of course, we encourage clergy to attend Friday night and Saturday’s sessions as well.

University of Dayton’s Virtual Learning Community for Faith Formation (VLCFF)  
Cycle 2: March 4 – March 24, 2018 (3-Week Seminars)  
(Registration: Opens Jan 17, 2018; Closes Feb 28, 2018)

- Catholic Identity and Culture  
- Catholic Teaching on Chastity, Family Life, and Human Sexuality Education  
- Designing a Parish Catechetical Plan (Bryan will facilitate; please sign up soon!)  
- Mercy  
- On Bended Knee  
- Overview of the GDC and NDC  
- Theological Reflection: Key to Connecting Faith and Life

CEMI Courses and Confirmation Preparation for Adults

Upcoming courses offerings are found at https://www.eventbrite.com/o/diocese-of-beaumont-evangelizationcatechesis-7578878365
Adult Faith Formation
Formed.org is a subscription service by parish that includes adult faith formation offerings, movies, and podcasts, and ebooks: https://formed.org/

Catechetical Planning
For those who are catechetical leaders, Bryan Reising can provide a closed course on “Designing a Parish Catechetical Plan.” Other catechetical leaders who have taken this three-week seminar found it very helpful in looking at all aspects of planning for catechesis for their AFC or parish. Please contact Bryan at breising@dioceseofbmt.org if you are interested. The course is scheduled for Cycle 2: March 4 - March 24, 2018 (seminars only) (Registration: Opens Jan 17, 2018; Closes Feb 28, 2018)

ACTS
To find out about upcoming ACTS Retreat and Activities: https://beaumontacts.org/

ACTS
Adoration • Community • Theology • Service

Religious Education Safe Environment Compliance Reminders
Any DRE, youth minister, catechist, adults helping with youth ministry, or anyone who may be in a ministry with minors is required to be in total compliance with safe environment requirements. To be in compliance, one must have attended in person a Protecting God’s Children (PGC) session. After 5 years from the initial training participation, a recertification is required. This can be done either through the diocesan website online module, or by attending another in person PGC session. If you have any questions regarding Safe Environment Training, you may contact the diocesan Safe Environment Coordinator (through the following information:)

Paul J Thomas
pthomas@dioceseofbmt.org
409-924-4315

Remember to plan and have your volunteers trained in advance.
Be mindful of upcoming future events so you have enough adults trained in PGC.
Thank you!

PGC Trainings
Protecting God’s Children for Adults
Monday February 5, 2018 @ 6:00pm
Lamar University Catholic Student Center
Facilitator: Kelly de la Rosa
Contact: Kelly 409-924-4360

Tuesday February 6, 2018 @ 6:00pm
Catholic Pastoral Center Conf. Room 1
Facilitator: Paul Thomas
Contact: Joseph 409-924-4309

February 23, 2018 @ 6:00pm
St Mary Parish in Cleveland
Facilitators: Bridgette McMillan & Flavia Avalos
(English and Spanish sessions on this date)
Contact: Yuri 281-592-2985

March 6, 2018 @ 6:00pm
Catholic Pastoral Center
Facilitator: Paul Thomas
Contact: Joseph 409-924-4309

Interested in a Bachelors or Masters in Theology
St. Thomas University in Houston:

National Conference for Catechetical Leadership (NCCL) Membership
All PCLs are now members of NCCL! You received instructions on how to set up your profile. Please do so soon! If you need help, please contact the Office of Evangelization and Catechesis. Check out the Web site: www.nccl.org. For information on the national conference (Chicago: May 30-June 2, 2018), go to www.nccl.us.
Parish Catechesis Question
Now that you read excerpts of Pope Francis’ Evangelii Gaudium, dream of how your parish can be and how your parish’s efforts to evangelize and catechize all will be different. I encourage you to read the entire document and share your dreams with each other (you can send them to me, and I can compile them in the next newsletter!

“Will you be my Valentine?”
By: Twyla Satterthwaite

Every February when I was a young girl, I longed to hear those words. Eventually those words were replaced with the desire to hear, “Will you go to the prom with me?” Now my forever sweetheart and I celebrate Valentine’s Day together. As you celebrate Valentine’s Day, remember it is also a good time to teach about our Catholic Faith.

Many American celebrations have roots in Catholic traditions. We will see many of these in the next few months. Mardi Gras (Fat Tuesday), Valentine’s Day, St. Patrick’s Day, St. Joseph’s Day. Take these as teachable moments to share with your students the deep roots that the Catholic Faith has in our American culture.

In the medieval world Holy Days (holidays) were days off for the common person. There were about 100 days a year that people were off (including Sundays and holidays). There would be festivals and religious services. Shops were closed and people were forbidden to work. This was a way that the Church ensured rest for the common person.

This holiday (Valentine’s Day) has its roots in ancient Rome with the martyrdom of two men. Emperor Claudius II executed the two men — both named Valentine — on Feb. 14 of different years in the 3rd century A.D. With the celebration of St. Valentine’s Day, the Catholic Church honors their martyrdom.

The stories of their lives are unclear but it is thought that one of the Valentines was executed for marrying Christian couples and aiding Christians who were being persecuted by Claudius II. Both acts were serious crimes at the time. Other stories say that one Valentine was martyred for trying to convert people to Christianity and to heal them of various illnesses. The story goes that just before his death he sent a note to a girl whom he had healed signed, “Your Valentine”.

Today we have added cards, flowers, chocolates, and jewelry, yet still we celebrate the love that couples share as a reflection of the love that God has for all of us. This year Valentine’s Day falls on the same day as Ash Wednesday, a day of fasting and abstinence. Perhaps you can celebrate sometime before or after the 14th. The date is not as important as the event. Fall in love again with your Valentine, eat lots of chocolates, and thank God for his great love for us! Happy Valentine’s Day whatever the date is!

CALLING FORMED & SENT DAY

Our Called, Formed, and Sent Day 2018 was Saturday, January 20, 2018 held at Our Mother of Mercy. We had nearly 200 participants and below are some pictures of our day together.