



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

GENERAL AUDIENCE

Saint Peter's Square

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Catechesis. The passion for evangelization: the apostolic zeal of the believer. 26. *Proclamation is joy*

Dear brothers and sisters, good morning!

After encountering several witnesses of the proclamation of the Gospel, I propose summarizing this series of catecheses on apostolic zeal in four points, inspired by the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, whose 10th anniversary we celebrate this month. The first point, which we will see today — the first of the four — cannot but relate to the attitude on which the substance of the evangelizing gesture depends: *joy*. The Christian message, as we have heard from the angel's words to the shepherds, is the proclamation of "a great joy" (*Lk* 2:10). And the reason? Good news, a surprise, a beautiful event? Much more, a Person: Jesus! Jesus is the joy. He is the God made man who came to us. The question, dear brothers and sisters, is therefore not *whether* to proclaim it, but *how* to proclaim it, and this "how" is joy. Either we proclaim Jesus with joy, or we do not proclaim him, because another way of proclaiming him is not capable of bringing the true reality of Jesus.

This is why a discontent Christian, a sad Christian, a dissatisfied, or worse still, resentful or rancorous Christian, is not credible. This person will talk about Jesus but no one will believe him!

Once someone said to me, talking about these Christians, “But these are po-faced Christians!”, that is, they express nothing, they are like that, and joy is essential. It is essential to keep watch over our emotions. Evangelization works in gratuitousness, because it comes from fullness, not from pressure. And when one evangelizes — one would try to do this, but it does not work — on the basis of ideologies, this is not evangelizing, this is not the Gospel. The Gospel is not an ideology. The Gospel is a proclamation, a proclamation of joy. Ideologies are cold, all of them. The Gospel has the warmth of joy. Ideologies do not know how to smile. The Gospel is a smile; it makes you smile because it touches the soul with the Good News.

The birth of Jesus, in history as in life, is the source of joy: think of what happened to the disciples of Emmaus, who could not believe their joy, and the others, then, the disciples all together, who when Jesus went to the Upper Room, could not believe their joy (cf. *Lk 24:13-35*). The joy of having the risen Jesus. An encounter with Jesus always brings you joy, and if this does not happen to you, it is not a true encounter with Jesus.

And what Jesus does with the disciples tells us that *the first who need to be evangelized are the disciples*. We are the first who need to be evangelized, we Christians — it is us. And this is very important. Immersed in today’s fast-paced and confused environment, we too in fact, may find ourselves living our faith with a subtle sense of renunciation, persuaded that the Gospel is no longer heard and no longer worth striving to proclaim. We might even be tempted by the idea of letting “others” go their own way. Instead, this is precisely the time to return to the Gospel to discover that Christ “is for ever young and a constant source of newness” (*Evangelii gaudium*, 11).

Thus, like the two at Emmaus, one returns to daily life with the enthusiasm of one who has found a treasure: they were joyful, those two, because they had found Jesus, and he changed their life. And one discovers that humanity abounds with brothers and sisters waiting for a word of hope. The Gospel is awaited even today. People of today are like people of all times: they need it. Even the civilization of programmed unbelief and institutionalized secularity; indeed, especially the society that leaves the spaces of religious meaning deserted, needs Jesus. This is the right moment for the proclamation of Jesus. Therefore, I would like to say again to everyone: “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” (ibid., 1). Let us not forget this. And if any one of us does not perceive this joy, they should ask themselves if they have found Jesus. An inner joy. The Gospel takes the path of joy, always; it is the great proclamation. I invite all Christians, wherever and in whatever situation they may be, to renew their encounter with Jesus Christ today. Each one of us, let us take a little time today and think: “Jesus, you are within me. I want to encounter you every day. You are a Person, you are not an idea; you are a travelling companion, you are not a programme. You are the Love that solves many problems. You are the beginning of evangelization. You, Jesus, are the source of joy!”. Amen.

Special Greetings

I welcome all the English-speaking pilgrims taking part in today's Audience, particularly the groups from England, Malaysia, the Philippines, Korea and the United States of America. Upon all of you and upon your families, I invoke the joy and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ. God bless you!

Let us pray, brothers and sisters, for peace, especially for martyred Ukraine, which is suffering so much, and then in the Holy Land, in Palestine and Israel, and let us not forget Sudan which is suffering so much, and let us think of any place where war rages. There are so many wars! Let us pray for peace: every day, may someone take some time to pray for peace. We want peace. I give you all my blessing!

Lastly, I greet *the elderly, the sick, newlyweds* — there are many — and *young people*, among whom I greet in particular the large group of the “Miraglia” Institute of Lauria. The final weeks of the liturgical year invite us to the meaning of Christian hope. With this in mind, I invite you always to embrace the meaning and value of daily experiences and also of trials, thinking that “in everything God works for good with those who love him” (*Rm* 8:28).

Summary of the Holy Father's words

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

In our continuing catechesis on apostolic zeal, we now turn to the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* and its summons to a renewed proclamation of the “joy of the Gospel”. The reason for that joy, which was first announced by the angels in Bethlehem, is our personal encounter with Jesus, who, now risen from the dead, offers us the promise of new and eternal life.

We see this in the Gospel story of the disciples who met the risen Lord on the road to Emmaus. With their hearts set afire by the Word of God that he proclaimed to them, they then recognized him in the breaking of the bread and joyfully returned to Jerusalem to announce his resurrection to the others.

Like those disciples, we too need to encounter the Lord ever anew in his Word and his sacramental presence, in order to share the liberating message of the Gospel with others. In our troubled world, so many people await a word of hope. May all Christians take up the challenge of sharing the joy of their own encounter with the risen Lord, the new life bestowed by his Spirit, and the freedom born of trust in his promises.
