



On April 9, which this year marks the transferred Solemnity of the Annunciation, the Vatican releases the latest Apostolic Exhortation from Pope Francis: *Gaudete et exsultate: On the call to holiness in today's world*.

“The Lord asks everything of us, and in return offers us true life, the happiness for which we were created.”

In his third Apostolic Exhortation (following *Evangelii gaudium* and *Amoris laetitia*) Pope Francis reflects on the call to holiness, and how we can respond to that call in the modern world. “My modest goal” in the Exhortation, Pope Francis says, “is to repropose the call to holiness in a practical way for our own time.”

The five chapters of *Gaudete et exsultate* follow a logical progression, beginning with a consideration of the call to holiness as it is in itself. The Holy Father then examines two “subtle enemies of holiness,” namely, contemporary gnosticism and contemporary pelagianism.

Holiness in living the Beatitudes

The heart of *Gaudete et exsultate* is dedicated to the idea that holiness means following Jesus. In this third chapter, Pope Francis considers each of the Beatitudes as embodying what it means to be holy. But if the Beatitudes show us what holiness means, the Gospel also shows us the criterion by which we will be judged: “I was hungry and you gave me food... thirsty and you gave me drink... a stranger and you welcomed me... naked and you clothed me... sick and you took care of me... in prison and you visited me.”

Pope Francis devotes the fourth chapter of *Gaudete et exsultate* to “certain aspects of the call to holiness” that he feels “will prove especially meaningful” in today's world:

perseverance, patience and meekness; joy and a sense of humour; boldness and passion; the communal dimension of holiness; constant prayer.

Spiritual combat and discernment

Finally, the Exhortation makes practical suggestions for living out the call to holiness. “The Christian life is a constant battle,” the Pope says. “We need strength and courage to withstand the temptations of the devil and to proclaim the Gospel.” In the fifth chapter, he speaks about the need for “combat” and vigilance, and calls us to exercise the gift of discernment, “which is all the more necessary today,” in a world with so many distractions that keep us from hearing the Lord’s voice.

“It is my hope,” Pope Francis concludes, “that these pages will prove helpful by enabling the whole Church to devote herself anew to promoting the desire for holiness.”